Hafa Adai!

Survey for 2023 CNMI Prevailing Wage Study begins. PAGE 2

Marianas visitor arrivals up 506% in January. PAGE 3

$1

Saipan Tribune

THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

CNMI-BOUND
Fourteen Kentucky Air Guardsmen from the 123rd Contingency Response Group are in the CNMI right now to participate in Cope North. In this photo, a member of the 123rd Logistics Readiness Squadron prepares to load a vehicle onto a North Carolina Air National Guard C-17 Globemaster III at the Kentucky Air National Guard Base in Louisville, Ky., Feb. 10, 2023. The vehicle is now in the Northern Mariana Islands.
Story on Page 5
U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD/PHIL SPECK

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Aggressive dad prompts OES lockdown

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES and LEIGH GASES
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leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTERS

A parent who had gotten aggressive while attempting to check on his son at Oleai Elementary School yesterday reportedly prompted a lockdown at the school, but he was later escorted out of the campus by Department of Public Safety police officers.

The incident also prompted the office of Education Commissioner Dr. Alfred Ada to issue a statement that reassured students and parents that the matter had already been settled and that no untoward incident happened.

DPS, however, remains mum about the incident, and referred inquiries to PSS.

Saipan Tribune learned from sources that the lock-

See OES on Page 4

NMHC cancels $5M power plant hardening project

» As CUC still incomplete with its application for CDBG-DR funding

Palacios

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

The Northern Marianas Housing Corp. was forced to cancel the Commonwealth Utilities Corp.'s Power Plant 1 Hardening Project worth $5 million as CUC was unable to complete its application to avail of the Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery grant funding.

It was learned at a joint hearing by the Senate and the House of Representatives' Public Utilities, Transportation, and Communica-

See NMHC on Page 4

Rising toll makes quake deadliest in Turkey's modern history

By SARAH EL DEEB, ZEYNEP BILGINSOY, BERNAT ARMANGUÉ AND ANDREW WILKS
Associated Press

ANTAKYA, Turkey (AP)—Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced Tuesday that more than 35,000 people have died in Turkey as a result of last week's earthquake, making it the deadliest such disaster since the country's founding 100 years ago.

While the death toll is almost certain to rise

See QUAKE on Page 4

Invasive CRB possibly found in Kagman

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Department of Public Lands and Natural Resources is investigating the possible discovery of the invasive coconut rhinoceros beetle in Kagman.

Acting DLNR secretary Sylvan Igisomar said yesterday that CNMI invasive species coordinator Frank Aldan is still working on it and that he will ask him for more information about the matter. Aldan

See CRB on Page 4

Igisomar

INSIDE

BUSINESS
The menu at The Original Lucky Bill American and Thai Food Restaurant is fit for a Thai king.
PAGE 11

NATION
Family and friends mourned the deaths of three Michigan State University students killed in a shooting.
PAGE 12

LIFE & STYLE
Actor Idris Elba says he's going to stick with being detective John Luther—not James Bond.
PAGE 15

SCAN ME WITH A COMPATIBLE QR READER TO KEEP UPDATED ON ALL THE LATEST NEWS.

Local

Survey for 2023 CNMI Prevailing Wage Study begins

The CNMI Department of Commerce's Central Statistics Division announced yesterday the beginning of data collection for the 2023 CNMI Prevailing Wage Study to update the current prevailing wages for the CNMI that expires on June 30, 2023.

All private businesses, public agencies, and organizations, with employees and with no employees in the CNMI are urged to participate in the 2023 PWS survey. The survey data collection period begins on March 1, 2023 and ends on March 15, 2023.

Like the 2022 PWS, the 2023 PWS data is submitted through a web portal. Businesses and organizations can access the portal through http://cnmidata.commerce.gov.mp/.

For those who registered and participated in the 2022 PWS survey, simply use your username and password that you created in 2022 to log in to the portal, update your business/agency/organization information, and submit your employee data for 2023.

For everyone else who will submit survey data for the first time via the CNMI PWS portal, you will be prompted to create a username and a password. Creating your username and password registers you into the site and allows you to provide basic directory information about your business/agency/organization and submit the requested employee data for the survey. Be sure to allow yourself time to review and understand the survey instructions provided on the portal before proceeding to complete the survey.

The 2018 NMI US Workforce Act requires the CNMI to publish a prevailing wage report annually for CW-1 visa determination and approval by the U.S. Department of Labor. Additionally, the 2023 PWS

See SURVEY on Page 4

Public warned of rip currents until Sunday night

The public is being warned that there is a high risk of rip currents through late Sunday night.

Based on the information received from the National Weather Service in Tiyan, Guam, and compiled at the CNMI Emergency Operations Center State Warning Point, dangerous rip currents. Are present in east-facing reefs of the Marianas through late Sunday night. Rip currents can sweep even the best swimmers away from shore into deeper water.

The public is reminded to stay out of the water along east facing reef lines. Swim near a lifeguard. If caught in a rip current, relax and float. Don't swim against the current. If able, swim in a direction following the shoreline. If unable to escape, face the shore and call or wave for help. ***(PR)***

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Magnitude 5.7 quake hits NZ, no damage reported

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP)—A magnitude 5.7 earthquake struck near the New Zealand capital Wellington on Wednesday, the U.S. Geological Survey said, as the nation grapples with widespread landslides and flooding across a sodden landscape after a cyclone.

New Zealand's National Emergency Management Center tweeted that the shake was "widely felt in the North Island." There were no immediate reports of damage or injury and no tsunami warning.

The quake struck under the Cook Strait that separates the North and South Islands at a depth of 74 kilometers (50 miles), USGS reported.

Wellington is on the southern end of the more populous North Island, which is responding to a cyclone this week that has left four people dead and is the South Pacific nation's most destructive weather event in decades.

While Cyclone Gabrielle is moving away from New Zealand, an unrelated weather system is forecast to bring more heavy rain in the days ahead, which will increase risks of further landslides and flooding.

The nation of 5 million people sits on the "Ring of Fire," an arc of seismic faults around the Pacific Ocean where earthquakes are common.

An earthquake in Christchurch on the South Island in 2011 killed 185 people and destroyed thousands of homes and buildings.

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Mahaela Manglona

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT
FOR THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE
NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE OF: SIMEON EVANGELISTA TAISACAN, Decedent.	Civil Action No.: 22-0172-CV **NOTICE OF HEARING**

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that the Petition for Partial Distribution by Administratrix will be heard before the Honorable Joseph N. Camacho, Associate Judge, on the 2nd day of March, 2023, at 10:00 a.m., at Room 220A, Superior Court of the Northern Mariana Islands, Susupe Village, Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. All persons interested are hereby notified to appear at the hearing and show cause, if any, why the order should not be made.

Dated this 9th day of February, 2023.

/s/
Hon. JOSEPH N. CAMACHO
Associate Judge

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IN THE SUPERIOR COURT
FOR THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE
NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

LUIS SABLAN CAMACHO, **Decedent.**	**Civil Action No.: 20-0011** **NOTICE OF HEARING**

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that the Petition by Administratrix Maria Carmen Camacho Maratita for the final distribution in this estate will be heard before the Honorable Joseph N. Camacho, Associate Judge, on the 2nd day of March 2023, at 10:00 a.m. at the NMI Superior Court Room 220, Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. All persons interested are hereby notified to appear at the hearing and show cause, if any, why the order should not be made.

/s/
Judge Joseph Norita Camacho

Marianas visitor arrivals up 506% in January 2023

According to the Marianas Visitors Authority, arrivals to the islands of Saipan, Tinian and Rota grew 506% to 12,432 visitors in January 2023, compared to 2,052 visitors received in January 2022.

A total of 10,097 visitors arrived from South Korea in January 2023, compared to 1,406 visitors in January 2022. T'Way Air had two charter flights in January and is adding additional charter flights from Seoul in February and March, while Jeju Air is expected to a double its current daily flights beginning in mid-April. Overall, by the end of fiscal year 2023 the number of available air seats from Korea is projected to be restored to 77% of the number available before the coronavirus pandemic.

The Marianas received 438 visitors from Japan in January 2023 compared to only nine visitors in January 2022. Travel packages to the Marianas are still expensive compared to Asian destination due to the strength of the U.S. dollar. The Japanese government also continues to offer incentives to encourage domestic—rather than outbound—travel. The MVA is enticing Japanese visitors with airport and shopping shuttles, one round of free golf, one free dive, and travel agent incentives for each package booked. Most passengers travelling between Saipan and Narita in January availed of the United Airlines flights as a convenient transit from the mainland U.S. and other countries.

The Marianas also received 1,033 visitors from Guam, 594 visitors from the U.S., and a combined 270 additional visitors from all other destinations in January. ***(MVA)***

Part-time pay for casino commissioners is pushed

Members of the Commonwealth Casino Commission continue to receive compensation even though the CCC office is closed, no work is being performed, and no revenue is being collected from the casino, according to Sen. Paul A. Manglona (Ind-Rota).

Each fiscal year, the CCC expends $65,000 for each commissioner's compensation, for a total of $325,000, he added.

The senator introduced during the Senate session on Tuesday a bill that would amend the Commonwealth Code to provide for part-time compensation for the CCC members.

Manglona stated in the legislation that when there is no casino activity on Saipan, the compensation of CCC members becomes an immense financial burden to the commission and the CNMI government.

The CCC office at the Springs Plaza in Gualo Rai has been temporarily closed since Jan. 19 due to the lack of funds.

Five commissioners, however, have not resigned. They held a board meeting last month. A former CCC staff volunteered her time to assist the commissioners in the

See PART-TIME on Page 4

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‘No deliberate intent to evade over $1M in taxes’

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

In response to the recent tax lien filed against him by the CNMI government, Vincent DLG Torres, the eldest brother of former governor Ralph DLG Torres, clarifies that there was no deliberate intent to evade paying his taxes. Rather, it was due to discrepancies that he was not made aware of for years.

The CNMI’s Division of Tax and Revenue recently filed a tax lien against Torres stating that the lawyer owes the CNMI over $1 million in relation to unpaid taxes dating back to 2014.

Although technically true, Torres clarifies that it was due to discrepancies found on his previous tax returns and it was not brought to light until he hired an accounting firm just a few years back.

“A few years ago, our accountant moved back to her country. So, I hired an accounting firm here on Saipan to file our taxes for the year. I was informed that there was a discrepancy with the filing of the previous year that needed to be amended. So, being concerned with good conscience, I voluntarily gave clear instruction to review all my financial documents from 2013 on to find out if there were any discrepancies. The accounting firm found discrepancies, so I told them to amend and file my taxes with the CNMI government immediately even if it means I will end up paying so much more. It was the right thing to do,” said Torres.

After finding the discrepancies, Torres said he and his new accounting firm filed amendments to his previous tax returns totaling $780,394.19, plus $394,702.65 in late fee and interest for a total $1,175,096.84.

Torres stated that he has already worked out a payment plan with the government and expects to pay off the debt within the year.

“I have already entered into a payment plan with the government, which I am up to date with my payments. And I plan to pay off the entire tax within a year. Had I not voluntarily took action to fix and amend my taxes, this would not have been an issue today. This was completely not a deliberate intent not to pay my taxes. Many individuals and companies enter into an agreement with the government to pay their taxes and never made it to front page news. I’m the lucky one politically,” he said.

According to the notice of tax lien filed with the District Court for the NMI and the CNMI Superior Court by Richard Santos, manager of the Collection and Remittance Branch of the Division of Revenue and Taxation, demand for payment of this liability has been made, but it remains unpaid.

“Therefore, there is a lien in favor of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands on all property and rights to property belonging to the taxpayer for the amount of these taxes and any additional penalties, interest, and costs that may accrue,” the tax lien notice said.

The tax lien also stated that Torres owes a total of $1,175,096.64 in taxes dating back to the tax period ending Dec. 31, 2014.

Santos elaborated that for tax year 2014, Torres carried an unpaid balance of $73,537.68; for tax year 2015, his unpaid balance was $564,156.23; in 2016, it was $182,293.11; in 2017, $123,113.42; in 2018, $166,844.61; in 2019, $6,411; and in 2020, $58,740.25.

NMHC

From page 1

tions committees Thursday that NMHC had to cancel last December the Power Plant 1 Hardening Project because, according to NMHC corporate director Jesse S. Palacios, it’s already been a couple of years since they asked CUC for its application, but its application was still incomplete due to various issues.

Palacios said this hardening project was meant to replace the shell of the power plant, which was damaged by not just Super Typhoon Yutu in 2018, but also by Typhoon Soudelor in 2015.

Rep. Vincent S. Aldan (Ind-Saipan), who chairs the House PUTC Committee, pointed out that CUC just bought one brand-new power generator engine and they are going to put it in a dilapidated Power Plant building in Lower Base.

“That sounds like we’re putting the cart before the horse,” Aldan said.

House floor leader Rep. Edwin K. Propst (D-Saipan) said he’s just a little bit shocked that somebody dropped the ball on this project—not at NMHC, but certainly somebody at CUC.

“We’re looking at a potential $5 million that would have basically been given to CUC to do a project that is rather important,” Propst said.

Aldan and Senate PUTC Committee chair Sen. Paul A. Manglona (Ind-Rota) presided over the joint public hearing, which was intended to obtain an update on the status of projects under the $243.9-million CDBG-DR grant agreement.

In explaining the CUC Power Plant Hardening Project, Palacios said that what CUC told them was that when the power plant was damaged, it took Saipan more than a couple of months to recover because the water got into the power system. Palacios said that, according to CUC, they had to first dry out everything before they could actually turn on the power plant.

He said the various issues with this project is the presence of asbestos and the power plant is located in a floodplain.

Palacios said all these environmental issues have to be addressed even prior to providing money to CUC for architecture and engineering, or A&E design, and to go over the request for proposals process.

Palacios agreed with Rep. Marissa Flores (Ind-Saipan) that CUC, as an autonomous agency, must provide NMHC with the A&E design before the project could proceed. He said the funding for A&E design was supposed to come out of the $5 million. Palacios said NMHC does not have any architects in house that can provide such A&E services.

“We need the plan anyways to bid out the project. If CUC does not move, it’s problematic because we have a deadline to meet,” he said.

Palacios said this CDBG-DR is a six-year grant and that they are now approaching its third year.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

CRB

From page 1

is currently on Rota.

Igisomar said he cannot deny nor confirm that Aldan’s team was able to collect early this week in Kagman samples of possible larvae from the coconut rhinoceros beetle.

The official said he is not aware if Aldan sent samples of the collected larvae to Guam for further analysis.

The first discovery of CRB in the CNMI was reportedly on Rota in 2017. No discovery of such species was confirmed on Saipan so far.

In September 2020, then-Rota mayor Efraim M. Atalig declared a State of Significant Emergency regarding the CRB infestation due to its potential impact on Rota’s agriculture.

Atalig issued the declaration after DLNR team confirmed a tip regarding possible infestation in the Gagani and Talakhaya areas of Rota.

The team spotted by using a drone decaying coconut trees and scissor cuts on the palm leaves.

QUAKE

From page 1

even further, many of the tens of thousands of survivors left homeless were still struggling to meet basic needs, like finding shelter from the bitter cold.

Confirmed deaths in Turkey passed those recorded from the massive Erzincan earthquake in 1939 that killed around 33,000 people.

Erdogan said 105,505 were injured as a result of the Feb. 6 quake centered around Kahramanmaras and its aftershocks. Almost 3,700 deaths have been confirmed in neighboring Syria, taking the combined toll in both countries to over 39,000.

The Turkish president, who has referred to the quake as “the disaster of the century,” said more than 13,000 people were still being treated in hospital.

Speaking in Ankara following a five-hour Cabinet meeting held at the headquarters of disaster agency AFAD, Erdogan said 47,000 buildings, which contained 211,000 residences, had been destroyed or were so badly damaged as to require demolition.

“We will continue our work until we get our last citizen out of the destroyed buildings,” Erdogan said of ongoing rescue efforts.

Aid agencies and governments were stepping up efforts to bring help to devastated parts of Turkey and Syria.

The situation was particularly desperate in Syria, where a 12-year civil war has complicated relief efforts and meant days of wrangling over how to even move aid into the country, let alone distribute it. Some people there said they have received nothing. In Turkey, meanwhile, families huddled in train cars.

The Syrian Health Ministry announced a final count of 1,414 deaths and 1,357 injuries in areas under government control.

On Tuesday, the United Nations launched a $397 million appeal to provide “desperately needed, life-saving relief for nearly 5 million Syrians” for three months. It came a day after the global body announced a deal with Damascus to deliver U.N. aid through two more border crossings from Turkey to rebel-held areas of northwest Syria—but the needs remained enormous.

Ahmed Ismail Suleiman set up a shelter of blankets outside his damaged house in the town of Jinderis, one of the worst-hit communities in northwest Syria. He was afraid to move his family back into a house that might not be structurally sound, so 18 people slept outside under the makeshift tent.

“We sit but can’t sleep lying down here,” he said. “We are waiting for a proper tent.”

SURVEY

From page 2

data will be used to publish a separate report detailing the survey methodology with a more detailed occupational wage statistics for PERM, H-1B and H-2B determination and approval by the U.S. Department of Labor.

“We ask all businesses, agencies, and organizations to complete this important survey. This will be the eighth round of the prevailing wage study survey, but our fifth annual PWS survey since 2019 under the mandate of the 2018 Workforce Act. I also want to extend my appreciation to the Department of the Interior’s Insular Affairs Office for funding this project,“ said Gov. Arnold I. Palacios.

Acting Commerce secretary Joseph S. Rios Jr. emphasizes the importance of completing the 2023 PWS survey. “I thank our private business partners and stakeholders and the public agencies on Saipan, Rota, and Tinian for putting the word out to promote the successful completion of this important survey. I humbly ask every business, agency, and organization in the CNMI to take some time to complete the 2023 PWS survey,” he said.

Questions and inquiries for the 2023 PWS should be directed to the Prevailing Wage Study project at telephone numbers 670-322-3005/3007 or email address cnmi.csd@commerce.gov.mp. ***(Commerce)***

OES

From page 1

down was allegedly caused by a threat made to one of the students. It was learned that the father of the student had rushed to the school in an attempt to see his son. The parent was not permitted to enter the school, which caused him to get aggressive. The parent was allegedly punching the school’s office door, which prompted school officials to call the police.

Fortunately, the parent later saw his son through the door and calmed down before police arrived.

The parent was then transported to the Commonwealth Health Center and he was allegedly admitted.

The disturbance reportedly happened at the entrance gate of the school during lunch where it was said the unidentified man was uncooperative with school staff.

According to Ada, there were children and staff outside during the lunch break, which prompted the school to go on lockdown for their safety and so as not to witness the scene that was unfolding.

A CNMI Public School System public advisory said “that at about 11am, [OES] initiated a school lockdown to ensure the safety of all students, staff, and individuals on campus. The Department of Public Safety was called immediately to provide patrol, guidance, and initiate further investigation.

“At about 11:17am, DPS and OES gave the all-clear signal. All students and staff are safe and there are no immediate threats to OEA or PSS at this time. OES dismissal time remains at 2pm.”

Ada said that no one was hurt, there was no violence, and no weapons during the disturbance.

Ada reminds parents and visitors that there are surveillance cameras in all gate entrances of schools and to make sure to follow the protocol of signing in at the school’s office at all times.

PART-TIME

From page 3

meeting.

The CCC has been facing a serious budget crisis after Saipan’s lone casino, Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC, was temporarily closed since March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The CCC’s entire source of revenue for its operations comes from IPI’s annual casino regulatory fee of $3.15 million. IPI, however, has failed to remit the fee since 2020. The government gives CCC only a $1 budget.

Manglona stated in his bill that in order to reduce the CCC’s financial burden when the casino is not active, the annual compensation of CCC members should be replaced with compensation based on meetings. This, he said, is fair and reasonable.

When the casino industry is revitalized, the commissioners’ compensation can be re-evaluated once again. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

Kentucky airmen in CNMI to support Western Pacific exercise

U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD/PHIL SPECK

Members of the 123rd Logistics Readiness Squadron load a pallet of cargo onto a North Carolina Air National Guard C-17 Globemaster III at the Kentucky Air National Guard Base in Louisville, Ky., Feb. 10, 2023. The gear is being transported to the Northern Mariana Islands for Cope North, a multinational exercise designed to enhance combat readiness in the Western Pacific.

U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD/PHIL SPECK

Tech. Sgt. Monica Sealey, a loadmaster with the North Carolina Air National Guard's 156th Airlift Squadron, directs the loading of a vehicle onto a C-17 Globemaster III at the Kentucky Air National Guard Base in Louisville, Ky., Feb. 10, 2023. The vehicle is being transported to the Northern Mariana Islands for Cope North.

U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD/PHIL SPECK

Members of the 123rd Logistics Readiness Squadron secure a vehicle on a North Carolina Air National Guard C-17 Globemaster III at the Kentucky Air National Guard Base in Louisville, Ky., Feb. 10, 2023. The vehicle is being transported to the Northern Mariana Islands for Cope North.

By DALE GREER
123rd Airlift Wing Public Affairs

A team of contingency response airmen from the Kentucky Air National Guard arrived here Sunday to provide cargo handling and aircraft maintenance services for Cope North, a multinational exercise designed to enhance combat readiness in the Western Pacific.

The airmen, all from the 123rd Contingency Response Group, will be sharpening their rapid mobility and air base-opening capabilities over the next 10 days, said Col. Ryan Adams, group commander.

Contingency response elements are a kind of "air base in a box"—a broad team of airmen who can deploy to a remote, non-functional airfield to establish air cargo and passenger operations within hours of arrival. These teams bring everything they need to be fully self-sufficient, from electrical generation, communications gear and security forces to cargo-handling equipment, aircraft maintenance and airfield control.

"Our element is designed and employed with agility in mind, well before the Agile Combat Employment construct was formalized for the broader Air Force," Adams said.

Working from Tinian International Airport on the island of Tinian, the team of 14 Kentucky airmen is postured to support on-load and offload of cargo, as well as quick-turn maintenance, for one aircraft at a time in support of joint and combined combat operations.

"They will support multiple C-130s, including two C-130J Super Hercules aircraft from the Kentucky Air National Guard, Pave Hawk helicopters, and aircraft from the Japanese Air Force," Adams said. "This team of multi-capable airmen also will conduct airfield survey and assessment, engine-running offloads and wet-wing defueling as they operate under remote and austere conditions."

Following operations on Tinian, the 123rd is expected to rapidly redeploy to Rota in the Northern Mariana Islands, where they will train with active duty airmen from the 921st Contingency Response Group, based at Travis Air Force Base, Calif.

"Cope North provides a rare opportunity for the Total Force to exercise this unique mission capability in the demanding environment of the South Pacific," Adams said.

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‘NMI close to being approved to execute small biz loan program’

By CHRYSTAL MARINO
chrystal_marino@saipantribune.com
Correspondent

At this point, the CNMI is close to being approved to implement the State Small Business Credit Initiative, which is a loan program intended for microbusinesses in the CNMI, according to CNMI Department of Commerce’s Economic Development officer Kioshi Cody.

In his presentation to the Rotary Club of Saipan last Tuesday, he said he feels the CNMI is about 99% approved to implement the loan program, which will total $57 million in all, to be issued in three tranches by the U.S. Treasury.

The disclosed Tuesday that the $57 million State Small Business Credit Initiative for the CNMI is already about 99.9% approved.

Cody later explained that the CNMI’s share is part of the $10 billion that the U.S. Treasury has allocated to all the states, territories and tribal governments to get capital lending to underserved entrepreneurs.

“They also have a very specific emphasis on what they call very small businesses, which is businesses with under eight employees. So they want to make sure that all of us are driving it into the sole proprietors hands with a couple of employees; but they are really targeting what we all consider small businesses,” Cody added. “We are really excited because the CNMI is just one big underserved area, so everyone’s going to be allowed to apply for this.”

CHRYSTAL MARINO

Members of the Saipan’s Rotary Club pose with Department of Commerce’s Economic Development officer Kioshi Cody after his presentation at the club’s luncheon last Tuesday at the Hyatt Regency Saipan.

An individual does not have to be a U.S. citizen for them to be eligible for this program. “Unlike [the Small Business Administration], where you have to be a U.S. citizen [or] green card holder…anyone’s open as long as you go through the banks for their underwriting, and 90% of that money stays within our economy,” he said.

As well as being open to anyone, the program is especially aimed toward very small businesses, with as low as eight employees.

Cody said the State Small Business Credit Initiative will be a type of loan/credit. “It’s going to go through the participating banks, and what separates that from, say, traditional lending, is if you have a high-risk borrower, banks are just going to say ‘no.’ That’s it. There’s nothing they can do, [whereas with the] SSBCI, we can contribute up to 50% of the loan. So a bank will be able to say, ‘Hey we got a risky borrower, Commerce, if you can offset 50% of this loan, we will assume half the risk if you will take on half the risk.’ And this should push it more into businesses that normally would’ve gotten just a hard no.”

Cody explained that the $57 million will be given in intervals, with a three-year gap between each tranche. “So they’re going to give it to us in three different [tranches]: $18 million is the first bag of money we get. In three years we get another $18 million. But if we don’t get into it, we lose it. In six years we have to get into that first tranche or we lose it. So they definitely designed the program that we have to move this money as quickly as possible. We’re not just going to sit on it…”

Cody stated that the U.S. Treasury are currently looking over the CNMI’s fiscal 2020 audit report, and will be contacting them this Thursday about it. “So we’re just kind of bracing for them to review all 200-plus pages and come back to us.”

As to when he expects the CNMI to implement the program, Cody said it will either be in late February or early March. “I just don’t want to commit to late February because as far as I can tell, we only need one or two more pieces. Maybe it’s late February, hopefully it’s early March.” He assured, though that the U.S. Economic Development Administration and the Commerce Department have been focused and energetic “in moving this as quickly as possible.”

Cody said that, once the CNMI gets the green light, the U.S. Treasury will wire the first $18 million and they have 30 days to start deploying that. “There’s no sitting on this money and taking your time—no—it’s ‘you get it, you better start using it, and you got three years to get into the next one, or we take it away.’”

“If you’re a small business, now you have access to capital that [and] we can work with you. …You don’t know how to write a business plan? We can pay someone to… write that for you. You don’t know if you should be a sole proprietor or an LLC, what’s the risk and reward? We’ll help you talk to a lawyer.

“But for the most part, for what people want to do here? It’s going to be fair game… and we’re really excited that there’s no citizenship required, because now we’re going look at translating brochures into Tagalog, Korean, Chinese, Japanese, Chamorro and Carolinian, so we can really get this out and push it on all three islands.”

“…It’s going to be a really exciting time, especially with the state of the economy,” Cody added. “The key piece is, of course, they want us to be responsible stewards for the $57 million over the next 10 years, but the biggest piece right now is they’re taking a look at our 2020 single audit and if they have any concerns, we’ll find out on Thursday on our next phone call and then we’ll be able to see what we can do to resolve that.”

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NOTICE OF BOARD COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Commonwealth Ports Authority hereby gives notice that there will be Board Committee Meetings on Tuesday, February 21, 2023, at 9:30 a.m. in the CPA Conference Room, second floor of the Captain George M. Fleming Building at the Port of Saipan on Saipan. The following items are on the agenda for the above-referenced meeting:

COMMITTEE AGENDAS

AIRPORT FACILITIES COMMITTEE

I. Call to Order, Roll Call, Adoption of Agenda, Adoption of Minutes (December 22, 2022)
II. Public Comments
III. Old Business:
1. Solar Request for Proposal (RFP) Status Report
2. Public-Private Partnership
3. Request for Proposal for Owner Engineer Agent
IV. New Business:
1. Amelia Earhart Memorial Monument
2. Board Resolution 2023-02: Appreciation for Airlines
3. Updated Airport Facilities Committee Report
V. Executive Session (if needed)
VI. Miscellaneous/Announcements
VII. Adjournment

PERSONNEL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

I. Call to Order, Roll Call, Adoption of Agenda, Adoption of Minutes (December 22, 2022)
II. Public Comments
III. Old Business:
1. CPA Employee Handbook
2. Drug Policy
3. Supervisor Evaluation
IV. New Business:
1. Board Resolution 2023-01: Honoring Roman T. Tudela as a Board Member
2. Desk Audit for All Management and Supervisory levels
3. No Smoking and Betelnut Chewing Policy
4. Updated Personnel Affairs Committee Report
V. Executive Session (if needed)
VI. Miscellaneous/Announcements
VII. Adjournment

SEAPORT FACILITIES COMMITTEE

I. Call to Order, Roll Call, Adoption of Agenda, Adoption of Minutes (December 22, 2022)
II. Public Comments
III. Old Business:
IV. New Business:
1. Echo Dock
2. Rota Terminal & Transfer
3. Updated Seaport Facilities Committee Report
V. Executive Session (if needed)
VI. Miscellaneous/Announcements
VII. Adjournment

FINANCIAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

I. Call to Order, Roll Call, Adoption of Agenda, Adoption of Minutes (December 22, 2022)
II. Public Comments
III. Old Business:
1. Audit Corrective Action Update
IV. New Business:
1. Transition Committee Report
2. Ricondo PFC Contract – Change Order
3. Supplemental Budget Request: Rota Tractor & Mower
4. Supplemental Budget Request: Rota Airport Roof Canopy Replacement Project, A&E Amendment 2
5. Updated Financial Affairs Committee Report
a. Grants Report
b. Internal Auditor Report
V. Executive Session
VI. Miscellaneous/Announcements
VII. Adjournment

All interested persons are welcome to attend and to submit written or oral testimony on the above agenda items. A time limit may be imposed. Video Conferencing is also available via Zoom. Zoom link: Meeting ID: 898 0318 0837 Passcode: 573227

Barrie C. Toves, Airport Facilities Chair | Ramon A. Tebuteb, Financial Affairs Chair | Pete P. Reyes, Seaport Facilities Chair | Joseph M. Diaz, Personnel Affairs Chair

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Educational program for K-12 teachers

The “Saipan’s Land and Sea: Battle Scars & Sites of Resilience” is a one-week educational program that provides K-12 teachers an incomparable opportunity to interact with a continuous, intact, and largely undisturbed record of conflict history in landmarks on and around the island of Saipan. Participants will learn how to take the program experience and translate it into their teaching contexts with the support of literature, oral accounts, film, photography, and other teaching resources.

The program is sponsored by the National Endowment for Humanities Landmarks of American History and Culture program and in collaboration with East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina. Dr. Anne Ticknor, professor in the College of Education, and Dr. Jennifer McKinnon, professor in the Department of History, will lead a team of educators, historians, archaeologists, authors, and cultural guides from around the United States to provide a view of World War II history and heritage from multiple perspectives with a contemporary lens and K-12 resources.

The one-week program will be offered twice in July. The first program offering is July 5-11, and the second program is July 12-18. Participants will receive a $1,300 stipend at the conclusion of the program.

Applications are currently open to full- or part-time K-12 educators who teach in public, charter, independent, and religiously affiliated schools, or as home schooling educators. Museum educators and other K-12 school system personnel—such as, but not limited to, administrators, substitute teachers, and curriculum supervisors—are also eligible to apply. Applications are accepted until March 3, 2023.

To learn more about the program, visit: https://sites.ecu.edu/saipanlandmarks2020/ ***(PR)***

Fed court denies DOC officer's request to dismiss case

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The U.S. District Court for the NMI has denied the motion to dismiss filed by one of the Department of Corrections officers facing a constitutional rights lawsuit filed by an inmate.

Chief judge Ramona V. Manglona denied DOC officer Damien Deleon Guerrero's motion to dismiss the charges filed against him by inmate Clifford J. Palacios.

Palacios is suing Deleon Guerrero, among other DOC officials, for allegedly violating his constitutional rights and negligence.

Manglona has yet to issue an official order explaining the reason for her dismissal.

According to court documents, Palacios is suing DOC's Kelvin Simina, De Leon Guerrero, Benjamin Lizama, Georgia Cabrera, Wally Villagomez, and one other unnamed individual for allegedly ordering that he be diverted back to DOC custody while he was on his way to the Commonwealth Health Center following a brutal fight between him and another inmate.

By allegedly ordering that he be diverted back to DOC instead of allowing him to get treated at the CHC, Palacios claims his constitutional rights were violated and DOC officers neglected their duty.

However, according to Deleon Guerrero's lawyer, assistant attorney general Carl Dela Cruz, his client should be dismissed from the lawsuit because even if the allegation are considered true, the complaint fails to "plausibly suggest an entitlement to relief."

"This is because the complaint is devoid of any allegation that Damien's conduct amounted to a 'deprivation' within the meaning of the Constitution. Thus, the complaint on its face fails to make a plausible claim for relief and making dismissal of the complaint appropriate," said the lawyer.

Also, Dela Cruz argued that his client is entitled to immunity.

Fire season in CNMI begins

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The CNMI has officially entered the dry season or "fire season." This means that, due to the hotter and drier climate, the CNMI may see an increase in forest fires in the next few months.

According to Department of Fire and Emergency Medical Services spokesperson Rob Mojica, the CNMI is officially in its "fire season" as of February and it is expected to last until July.

Because of this, DFEMS is seeking the community's help in ensuring that no forest fires are accidentally started this dry season.

"Be considerate and cautious about what you're burning because all it takes is one ember to start a mass wildfire," he said.

Things to consider, Mojica said, is the burning of debris, grass trimmings, and dead foliage. "Be mindful and to burn them in small increments to avoid a spread," he said.

In addition, DFEMS encourages everyone to get a permit when burning household debris.

DFEMS responded to its first grassfire for the season near the old Kan Pacific swimming pool on Monday, Feb. 13.

According to DFEMS, at approximately 10:38am, a Department of Public Safety patrol vehicle reported the grassfire.

At 10:40am, Engine 2 from the Garapan Fire Station responded to the location of the fire and arrived on scene at 10:50am. By 12:15pm, the fire was fully extinguished.

Virtual VEAC to be held for NMI veterans

By CHRYSTAL MARINO
chrystal_marino@saipantribune.com
Correspondent

In an effort to help veterans avail of certain assistance programs and benefits after years of service the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs will be holding an online Veterans Experience Action Center meeting on March 1, 2023, from 8am to 1pm. The meeting will be virtual.

State and community partners will host the virtual event for both Guam and the CNMI's veterans, caregivers, service members, survivors, and family members. It will include special guests from the VA Center for Women Veterans, and several partners.

By calling in, participants may receive one-on-one assistance on how to avail of VA benefits, healthcare, the PACT act, community service, peer-to-peer connection, memorial affairs, and crisis resources.

Those interested may schedule an appointment to speak directly with VA and get dedicated one-on-one service. At the time of your appointment, a Veterans Service Officer will call—via telephone—to kick off your appointment.

Veterans who don't have access to a telephone to receive their VEAC appointment call can visit VA sites where phones will be provided. Limited appointments are available and registration runs through to Feb. 26, 2023.

Visit www.va.gov/VEAC for more information and to register.

To register go to: https://book.appointment-plus.com/db3yrgm2/

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NOTICE OF REGULAR MEETING

The Commonwealth Ports Authority (CPA) hereby gives notice that a Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors will be held on Tuesday, February 21, 2023, at 9:30 a.m. in the CPA Conference Room, second floor of the Captain George M. Fleming Building at the Port of Saipan on Saipan. The following items are on the agenda for the above-referenced meeting:

AGENDA

I. **PRELIMINARY MATTERS**
1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
3. Adoption of Agenda
4. Adoption of Minutes (December 22, 2022)

II. **PUBLIC COMMENT(S)**
III. **CORRESPONDENCES**
IV. **COMMITTEE REPORTS**
1. Financial Affairs Committee (with Grants and Internal Auditor Reports)
2. Airport Facilities Committee
3. Seaport Facilities Committee
4. Personnel Affairs Committee

V. **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**
VI. **OLD BUSINESS:**
1. Request for Proposal for Owner Engineer Agent
2. CPA Employee Handbook
3. Drug Policy
4. Supervisor Evaluation

VII. **NEW BUSINESS:**
1. Desk Audit for All Management and Supervisory levels
2. No Smoking and Betelnut Chewing Policy
3. Board Resolution 2023-01: Honoring Roman T. Tudela as a Board Member
4. Board Resolution 2023-02: Appreciation for Airlines
5. Echo Dock
6. Rota Terminal & Transfer
7. Ricondo PFC Contract - Change Order
8. Supplemental Budget Request: Rota Tractor & Mower
9. Supplemental Budget Request: Rota Airport Roof Canopy Replacement Project, A&E Amendment 2

VIII. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**
• Legal Counsel Reports: Legal matters/Litigation

IX. **MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS**
X. **ADJOURNMENT**

All interested persons are welcome to attend and to submit written or oral testimony on the above agenda items. A time limit may be imposed. Video Conferencing is also available via Zoom. Zoom link: Zoom link: Meeting ID: 898 0318 0837 Passcode: 573227

KIMBERLYN KING-HINDS
Chairwoman, Board of Directors

February 08, 2023

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COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

INVITATION FOR BID
CUC-IFB-23-014

ISLAND WIDE ROAD RESTORATION, SAIPAN

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms for the Island Wide Road Restoration, Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

This Indefinite Delivery/Indefinite Quantity work consists of excavation, placing of flowable fill and asphalt to restore pavement areas cut by CUC to repair waterlines, sewerlines and customers' water service connections. Payment is only for the items completely installed and accepted by CUC and DPW. The duration of the contract is one year (365 calendar days) from date of award with an option to extend for an additional year if exercised by CUC.

The Bid Package will be emailed, upon receipt of a non-refundable payment from the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check, or credit card in the amount of $200.00 (non-refundable), after registration at the CUC, Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Dandan, Saipan, between 7:30 AM to 11:30 AM and 12:30 PM to 4:00 PM, Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays.

A Pre-Bid Conference followed by a Site Visit is scheduled on **February 6, 2023 at 10:00 AM (ChST)** at the CUC Main Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Room No.17, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building.

One (1) original and Seven (7) hard copies must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked **"CUC-IFB-23-014, Island Wide Road Restoration"** to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on February 28, 2023**, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered. Bid shall be submitted on the provided Bid Forms. Bidders are required to complete all Bid Forms. Bidders may supplement the form as appropriate. Bids will be required to be submitted under a condition of irrevocability for a period of 60 days after submission.

All bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract.

A Bid Guarantee of fifteen (15%) percent of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The security deposit may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety or other surety acceptable to the Attorney General. A Payment Bond of one hundred (100%) percent and a Performance Bond of one hundred (100%) percent of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidders. The Payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety or other security acceptable to the Attorney General. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). Bidders are required to submit a clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.

Bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations.

All questions or request for clarification regarding this project must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on February 10, 2023** to Manny B. Sablan, Jr., CUC Purchasing Administrator, via email – manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Yvonne C. Ogumoro Acting Water & Wastewater Division Manager – via email yvonne.ogumoro@cucgov.org and Marcela Tenorio, Procurement & Supply, Senior Administrative Technician – via email marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids and waive any imperfection in the bid proposal in the best interest of the government. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

GARY P. CAMACHO
Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
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The Associated Press | Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

Up in the air: What are we shooting down every day?

In 1957, during the frosty years of the Cold War, Ike and Canadian Prime Minister John Diefenbaker established the North American Air Defense Command in anticipation of defending the continent from Soviet long-range bombers—Sputnik was still a few months away—and NORAD went on alert.

Joe Biden was 14 years old at the time and Justin Trudeau's father Pierre wouldn't make his first run for Parliament for another eight years. But on Saturday afternoon, for the first time in NORAD's 66 years, President Biden and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau jointly authorized the long since renamed North American Aerospace Defense Command to shoot down something out of the sky.

And so fell on the Yukon tundra was an object, following by a day another object that smashed into the frozen waters off northern Alaska, both zapped by Air Force F-22s with AIM-9X Sidewinder missiles (which cost a couple of hundred of dollars a piece). But having waited 66 years for its first search and destroy mission, NORAD was back in the skies less than 24 hours later, shooting down Object No. 3 Sunday afternoon over Lake Huron, with another Sidewinder, this off an F-16.

These objects are not the Soviet bombers, but balloons, according to Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, who was briefed by National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan about Object 1 (Alaska) and Object 2 (Yukon). That Object 3 (Lake Huron) is also a balloon would make sense.

Now who could be sending high altitude balloons aloft to look down on us? We know that China had a larger spy balloon lazily cruising above the country until a Sidewinder put it in the drink off of South Carolina. Has the Pentagon thus learned how to spot these floaters and dispatch them? We hope so.

For decades, NORAD was mostly noticed for its annual Christmas Eve tracking of Santa Claus heading south from the Pole. Now it's focused on finding other red objects, with motivations not as nearly benevolent as St. Nick's.

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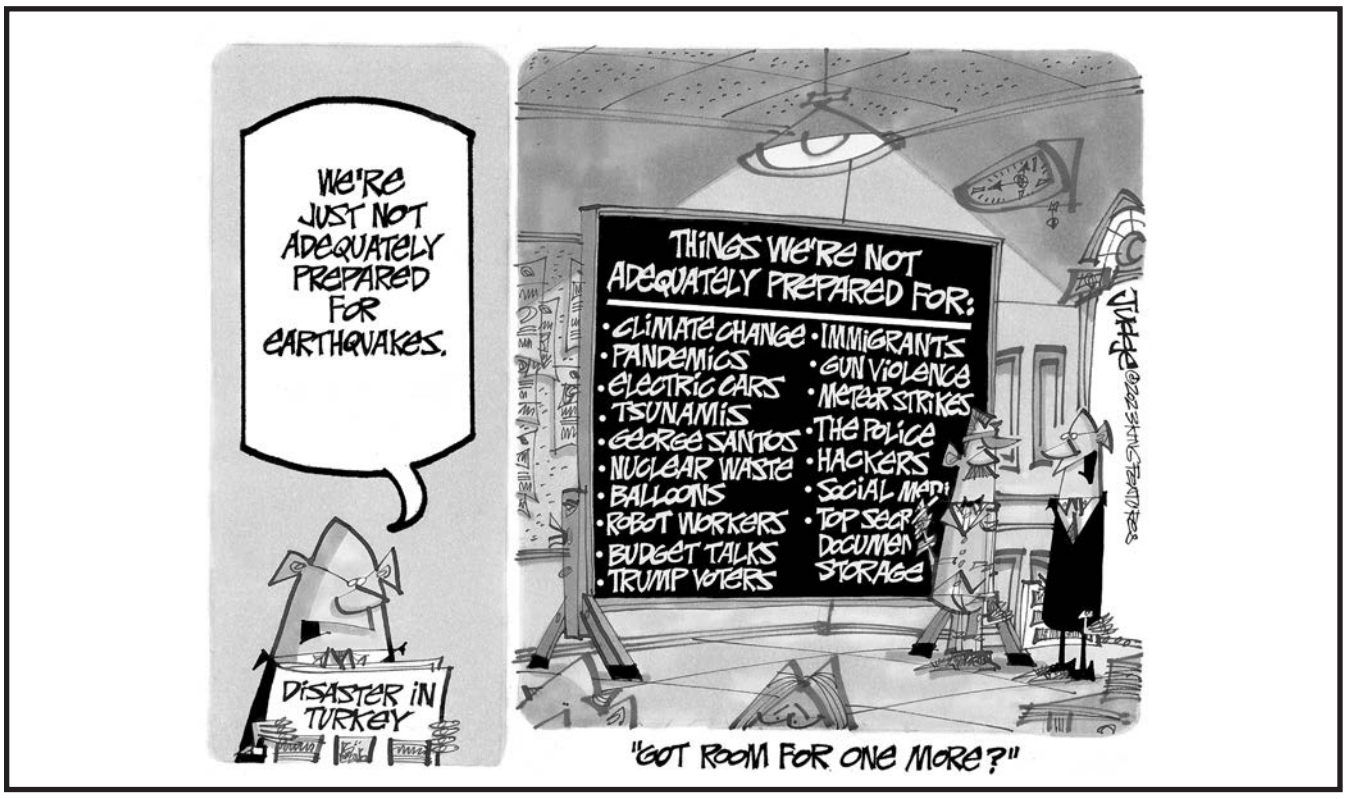


What do the Oscar best picture choices tell us about the world we live in?

By NICHOLAS GOLDBERG
Los Angeles Times

Nicholas Goldberg is an associate editor and Op-Ed columnist for the Los Angeles Times.

Just what do the Academy Awards tell us about the world we live in?

I began thinking about this after I was contacted by Carl Plantinga, a research fellow and professor of film and media studies at Calvin University in Michigan. Plantinga was pushing a theory that, for better or worse, Oscars for best picture tend to honor films with simple, straightforward, morally clear messages and are less likely to go to morally complex or ambiguous films.

His argument—laid out as the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences prepares to hold its 95th awards ceremony on March 12—is that films such as this year's "Tár," a complicated drama about political correctness, sexual harassment, art, genius, leadership, truth and deception, may be nominated for best picture (as "Tár" was), but more often than not they lose in the end.

Filmmakers over the years have had better luck with more straightforward movies such as another 2023 nominee, "Top Gun: Maverick."

"The academy tends to favor moral inspiration over moral challenge," says Plantinga.

The classic example of this, Plantinga says, came in 1977, when the heroic fantasy "Rocky" won the best picture award over Martin Scorsese's superior but disturbing "Taxi Driver." A decade earlier, in 1968, two films I think of as morally complicated—"Bonnie and Clyde" and "The Graduate"—were nominated but lost to "In the Heat of the Night," a more clear-cut story about a white Mississippi police chief and a Black Philadelphia detective learning to respect one another.

In 1966, "The Sound of Music" beat out "Dr. Zhivago," a film that sent a mixed message about adultery and the Russian Revolution. In 2019, the formulaic buddy film "Green Book" beat "BlackkKlansman" and "Roma." In 1990, "Driving Miss Daisy" won best picture and Spike Lee's "Do the Right Thing" wasn't even nominated.

Francis Ford Coppola's "Apocalypse Now" lost after being nominated. Stanley Kubrick's "Paths of Glory" was snubbed entirely.

This is all just anecdotal evidence, of course. Not everyone will agree with Plantinga's theory, which even he acknowledges is more a tendency than a rule. For one thing, it's a subjective judgment whether a movie is morally complex. For another, there are exceptions, especially in the modern era, including but not limited to "Midnight Cowboy," the first and second "Godfather" movies, "Parasite" and "Nomadland," all of which won Oscars for best picture.

Some people think Plantinga's point is an obvious one that goes almost without saying. The Times' former film critic Kenneth Turan told me that saying best picture winners tend toward moral clarity rather than moral complication is "like saying water is wet."

"The academy talks about artistic excellence, but it's also made up of Hollywood people and they like Hollywood movies, by and large," Turan said.

Still, I found the theory intriguing because it speaks to something that bothers me: As a society, we are not comfortable with nuance and doubt—yet we need to be to make sense of our complicated world. Sophisticated, ambiguous films can help us see more than one side of a question and empathize with people who are unlike us. They challenge our way of thinking; they remind us that the world is usually not neatly divided into good guys and bad guys, right and wrong.

Of course films that deliver messages of moral clarity and clearly separate right from wrong have value too. They can be inspirational, as Plantinga notes, and can encourage us to be our best selves. A buddy movie about people of different backgrounds overcoming their prejudices or a story of heroism or selflessness or perseverance against obvious evil can rouse and energize us. The same goes for a story of an underdog who defies expectations—or an aging, insubordinate former fighter pilot who proves he's still the best.

But, frankly, I talked and thought a lot more about "Tár" after seeing it than I did about "Top Gun: Maverick."

Were the filmmakers on Lydia Tár's side or against her? Is the movie a skewering of wokeness and cancel culture or is Tár a serial sexual harasser who gets what she deserves? It's unclear; it's sending multiple messages about things that don't lend themselves to easy judgments.

"These movies have the capacity to teach us something and to alter our responses," Plantinga says. "That's what conflict does."

Of course, as Turan notes, many people go to the movies for entertainment and escape, not to have their assumptions challenged. "If those people want torturous moral ambiguity, they can just read the newspaper," he says.

Certainly that's true. But in an era of partisanship, polarization, rancor and demonization, in a country where many people believe their side has a monopoly on truth, there's much to be said for thinking complicated thoughts, for wrestling with conflicting ideas, and identifying with characters who aren't simple heroes. Art that does that—in addition to entertaining us—can keep us from falling into reflexive, smug certainty and self-righteousness.

The alternative to black and white is not always Technicolor. Sometimes it's shades of gray.

EDITORIAL POLICY Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

Yes, you can help the Turkey-Syria earthquake victims

By RAKSHA VASUDEVAN
Los Angeles Times

Raksha Vasudevan is a writer based in Denver and a former aid worker. @RakshaVasudevan

The Antakya I know is a cosmopolitan city in southern Turkey. Kurtuluş Caddesı, the city's central avenue, is similar to streets in Los Angeles or Miami, lined with restaurants and palm trees, resonant with multiple languages. The city was devastated in the Feb. 6 earthquake that rocked Turkey and Syria, killing more than 36,000 people to date. To now see the images of Antakya with its buildings and homes collapsed and its trees turned to wreckage is shocking, engendering a sense of despair and helplessness that is easy to give into. But there are ways to help.

I lived and worked in Antakya in 2014. My employer, a French humanitarian agency, operated across the border in Syria's northern Idlib province, providing assisted walking devices and rehabilitation therapy to civilians who'd lost limbs in the Syrian war. For better or worse, that area is no stranger to disaster, and neither are the many humanitarian organizations that have been operating there for decades. Our role—as humans wanting to help in the face of unspeakable suffering—is to recognize that there are people and institutions on the ground with years of experience navigating similar emergencies, and to support them. The best way to do that now is to send money.

Well-intentioned efforts to collect and send more tangible items—like clothing, medical or camping equipment—are exorbitantly expensive because of shipping and handling costs. It's also a logistical nightmare for aid organizations to get these goods to the right people in the right places. Having to load and unload literal tons of unmatched old clothes, having to drive them to and from ports and airfields—it's exhausting, and frankly, completely unnecessary.

In our rush to help, it's easy to overlook the fact that Turkey is an upper-middle income country and many of the affected areas are large, well-connected metropolitan centers. Any and all items needed for an emergency response can almost certainly be bought nearby, which helps ensure that they're truly suited to people's needs there, and also helps rebuild the newly fragile economy. Sending money also helps pay for relief organizations' labor, staff and experts in the field. There are not enough (skilled) volunteers in the world to rebuild all the homes, buildings, parks and roads that were destroyed; that will take specialized skills from engineers, architects, urban planners and so on. They cannot be expected to do all that work for free indefinitely. In the immediate aftermath of an emergency, cash trumps all.

Of course, the danger with huge influxes of cash is a scenario like post-earthquake Haiti, where more than $13 billion of aid money poured in after a powerful 2010 earthquake ravaged the country. Yet, much of that money was misspent or mismanaged. Today, that country is hardly better prepared for the crises that continue to afflict it, including not only earthquakes but also, more recently, cholera.

Avoiding another scenario like that takes work on our part. It takes spending time to find out which organizations or groups have good reputations in Turkey and Syria, and also the capacity to deploy donations for a meaningful and sustained emergency response. I'm lucky to have friends and former colleagues in Antakya whom I can ask. (From their vantage, they've recommended the White Helmets, Molham Volunteering Team, Syrian American Medical Society, Doctors Without Borders and Norwegian Refugee Council). If you want to do your own research, you might know an aid worker, or someone with family in Turkey or Syria who could help point you in the right direction. Social media, of course, is also full of GoFundMe's. If a fundraising campaign is led by someone you trust and they're posting receipts of how they're spending donations or offering some other form of accountability, that could also be a direct route of helping that avoids the overhead costs of larger institutions.

In the months to come, the emergency will continue, albeit in a different form. Rebuilding—especially in parts of Syria already torn apart by war—will take years, and our response will matter then, too. Supporting the area in a few years might mean continued donations, but it could also take the form of amplifying the advocacy of the local leaders who emerge during this crisis. Or you could sponsor asylum seekers from that area, which individual Americans can now do. Or do something fun, like planning a holiday in the area once rebuilding has progressed further. Antakya is beautiful, its old town lined with charming cobblestone streets, its markets selling fresh savory pide and the best sweet homemade kunefe I've ever tasted. Just outside the city, stunning rock-carved churches and mosques dot the hills.

Some of those sites have been destroyed by the earthquake. But with the right kind of help, they can be restored, perhaps not exactly as they were before—but that's not the point. Disasters transform us. So can rebuilding collectively, with the kind of care and sustained engagement that we'd extend to our own neighbors. In other words, this is a time for mutual aid, which, above all, is tailored to the needs of our neighbors and continues even after the media have stopped covering the story. But mutual aid doesn't have to stop at the boundary of our neighborhood or even our country—it can span borders, oceans and time zones. It can span humanity.

How should global leaders use trillions of dollars to combat climate change?

By GRETA THUNBERG
Los Angeles Times

Greta Thunberg is a climate justice activist. This essay was adapted from her forthcoming book, The Climate Book: The Facts and the Solutions.

We cannot just buy, invest or build our way out of the climate and environmental crisis. Nevertheless, money is still very much at the heart of the problem. Investment is vital. Financial resources need to be directed to the best available solutions, adaptations and restorations, as much as we can possibly find. But the money seems to be going elsewhere.

The often-used argument that "we don't have enough money" has been disproven so many times. According to the International Monetary Fund, the production and burning of coal, oil and fossil gas was subsidized by $5.9 trillion in 2020 alone. That is $11 million every minute, earmarked for planetary destruction. During the COVID-19 pandemic, governments around the world launched unprecedented financial rescue packages. These recovery plans were seen as a huge opportunity to set humanity on a brand-new course for a more sustainable economic paradigm. They were called "our last chance to avert a climate disaster," as the enormous size of the investments would make it impossible for us to undo their consequences in the future if we got that funding even slightly wrong.

However, in June 2021, the International Energy Agency concluded that out of the historic global recovery plan, only a bleak 2% had been invested into green energy, whatever "green" means in this case. In the European Union, for instance, those 2% might well be spent on fossil gas from Vladimir Putin's Russia or on burning biomass made from clear-cut forests as these activities—along with many others—are at the moment considered green in the brand-new EU taxonomy.

So they did not just get it slightly wrong—our leaders completely failed. And they continue to fail; despite all the beautiful words and pledges, they are not moving in the right direction. In fact, we are still expanding fossil fuel infrastructure all over the world. In many cases, we are even speeding up the process. China is planning to build 43 new coal power plants on top of the 1,000 plants already in operation. In the U.S., approvals for companies to drill for oil and fossil methane gas are on schedule to reach their highest level since the presidency of George W. Bush.

Oil production is soaring all over the globe: new oil fields are being opened, pipelines are being built, new oil licenses are being auctioned and the search for even more production sites is ongoing. Even the use of coal is expanding—the global amount of coal-fired electricity reached an all-time high in 2021. The overall forecast for 2022 tells of further increasing emissions of CO2.

We are two years—one-fifth of the way—into what is called "the decisive decade." For even a small chance of staying in line with the 1.5 degrees Celsius target, our emissions must be in an unprecedented decline. But instead, in 2021, we saw the second-biggest emissions rise ever recorded. And it keeps increasing. A United Nations report from September 2021 states that they are expected to rise by 16% by 2030 compared to 2010 levels. Add to this the fact that at 1.2 degrees Celsius of warming we are already seeing feedbacks that are not fully accounted for in the scientific pathways. According to the European Union's Copernicus Atmosphere Monitoring Service, global wildfires in 2021 created the equivalent of 6,450 megatons of CO2. That is 148% higher than—way more than double—the total fossil fuel emissions of the entire European Union in 2020.

If the people in power were the least bit honest about their strategies for staying below 1.5 or even 2 degrees Celsius of global average temperature rise, they would be pouring money into projects like the world's biggest direct air carbon removal plant in Iceland. But there are still only 20 or so small carbon capture and storage plants running worldwide, some of which have been shown to actually emit more CO2 than they capture.

The carbon removal facility in Iceland has some serious scaling up to do—an effort that would dwarf all other human endeavors of the past. Yet that is clearly not happening, which really makes no sense at all. Why foster the idea that this underdeveloped technology could be a substitute for the immediate, drastic mitigation needed? Why bet our entire civilization on it without making the slightest effort to make it work? Why make the world picture a potential solution so vividly that we include it in every possible future scenario and then fail to invest in it? Could it be that it was never even meant to work at scale? That it was just being used—once again—as a way of deflecting attention and delaying any meaningful climate action so that the fossil fuel companies can continue business as usual and keep on making fantasy amounts of money for just a little while longer?

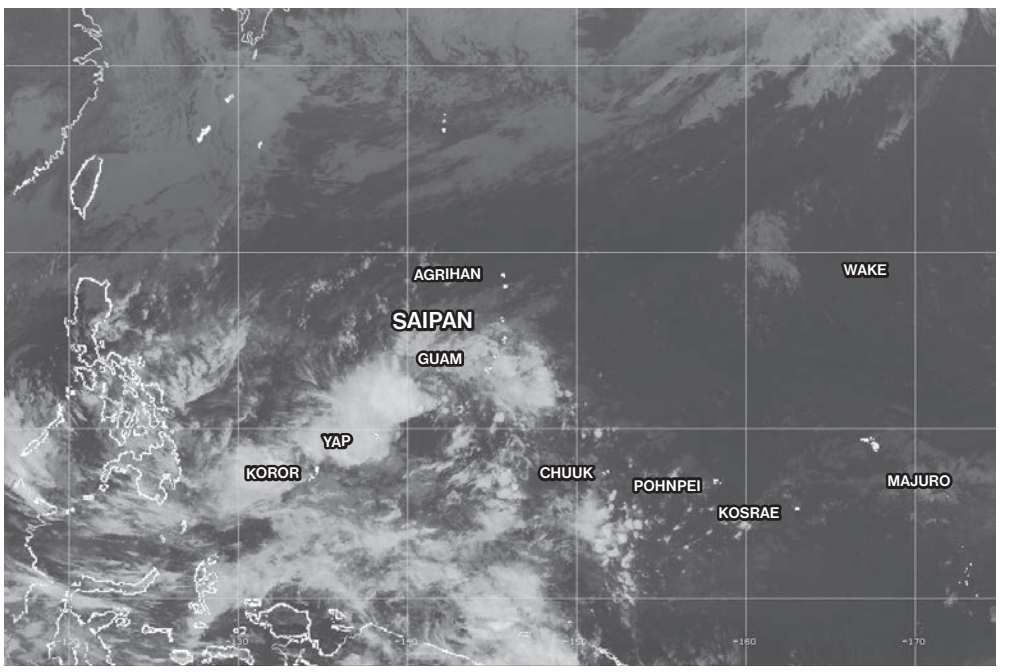
Either way, it is crystal clear that technology alone will unfortunately not save us. And it is still very much the lobbyists, fighting for the interests of short-term economics, who occupy the driver's seat in our society. Companies and politicians have done so much to use false solutions to preserve the status quo. But the real answers are right in front of us.

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY
Scattered showers. Partly sunny	Partly sunny	A 30 percent chance of showers. Mostly sunny	Mostly sunny	Mostly sunny
86º 78º	86º 78º	86º 78º	86º 78º	88º 76º

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 8:12 AM, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2023

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Radar and satellite imagery shows scattered showers over the Marianas and their waters. Seas are between 8 and 9 feet. East swell at about 5 to 6 feet and north swell on the rise at 2 to 4 feet.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

MICRONESIA		▲ ▼ °F
Guam and Rota	Thunderstorms	85° / 79°
Palau	Scattered Thunderstorms	84° / 77°
Yap	Scattered Thunderstorms	86° / 79°
Chuuk	Partly Cloudy	87° / 80°
Pohnpei	Partly Cloudy	88° / 77°
Kosrae	Partly Cloudy	87° / 79°
Majuro	Isolated Thunderstorms	84° / 79°

AROUND THE GLOBE		▲ ▼ °F
Auckland	Partly Cloudy	67° / 56°
Beijing	Partly Cloudy	67° / 56°
Hong Kong	Partly Cloudy	68° / 62°
Honolulu	Partly Cloudy	82° / 70°
London	Mostly Cloudy	46° / 39°
Los Angeles	Cloudy	59° / 52°
Manila	Partly Cloudy	89° / 79°
Melbourne	Sunny	72° / 55°
Miami	Showers	81° / 74°
New York	Partly Cloudy	44° / 31°
Osaka	Partly Cloudy	51° / 37°
Paris	Cloudy	41° / 36°
Busan	Partly Cloudy	46° / 35°
Rome	Showers	58° / 52°
Salem	Partly Cloudy	58° / 39°
San Francisco	Rain/Wind	51° / 37°
Seoul	Mostly Sunny	35° / 25°
Tokyo	Partly Cloudy	55° / 40°
Washington, DC	Mostly Sunny	45° / 25°

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:41 AM	6:20 PM
Friday	6:40 AM	6:21 PM
Saturday	6:40 AM	6:21 PM
Sunday	6:40 AM	6:21 PM
Monday	6:39 AM	6:22 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	2:34 AM	1:57 PM	-
Friday	3:39 AM	3:02 PM	-
Saturday	4:42 AM	4:10 PM	-
Sunday	5:41 AM	5:18 PM	-
Monday	6:34 AM	6:22 PM	-

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		FEET
5:44 AM	High Tide	1.52
10:04 AM	Low Tide	1.27
2:49 PM	High Tide	1.65
10:50 PM	Low Tide	-0.45

NEWS DESK For news tips, corrections and requests for news coverage, call (670) 235-NEWS (6397), 235-2440, fax 235,3740. E-mail: editor@saipantribune.com. Website:www.saipantribune.com.

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF FEBRUARY 1, 2023

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA117	9:50AM	10:35AM	Daily

SAIPAN- NARITA (NRT)

UA824	7:05AM	9:45AM	1, 3, 5

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

PR 111	5:30AM	7:25AM	Daily
UA193	7:55PM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Palau
UA183	8:00PM	9:50PM	Daily

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

UA117/183	9:50AM	9:50PM	Daily via Guam
UA117/193	9:50AM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Guam, Palau
OZ624/701	3:50PM	10:35AM+1	3,6 via Incheon

SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)

TW308	3:15AM	6:55AM	1, 4, 5, 7
TW9308	3:50AM	7:20AM	1, 4, 5, 7
OZ624	3:50PM	7:40PM	3, 6
7C3405	4:35PM	8:25PM	Daily

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA174	8:00AM	8:46AM	Daily

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

UA825	9:25PM	2:00AM+1	2, 4, 7

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

PR110	10:05PM	3:55AM+1	Daily
UA184	10:55PM	4:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7
UA192	10:40PM	6:30AM+1	2, 5 via Palau
UA189	12:40AM	6:30AM	3, 6

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA189/174	12:40AM	8:46AM+1	3, 6 via Guam
UA184/174	10:55PM	8:46AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6,7 via Guam
UA192/174	10:40PM	8:46AM+1	2, 5 via Palau, Guam
OZ704/623	11:50PM	2:20PM+1	2, 5 via Incheon

INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN

OZ623	9:00AM	2:20PM	3, 6
7C3406	10:10AM	3:30PM	Daily
TW307	8:45PM	2:15AM+1	3, 4, 6, 7
TW9307	9:20PM	2:50AM+1	3, 4, 6, 7

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

MARIANAS SOUTHERN AIRWAYS

INITIAL DAILY FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF FEBRUARY 13, 2023

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
11:20 A.M.	11:38 A.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
3:40 P.M.	3:58 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
9:40 A.M.	9:58 A.M.	6,7

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
12:00 P.M.	12:18 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
4:20 P.M.	4:38 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
10:20 A.M.	10:38 A.M.	6,7

SAIPAN TO ROTA

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
7:20 A.M.	8:00 A.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
5:00 P.M.	5:40 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
7:40 A.M.	8:20 A.M.	6,7

ROTA TO SAIPAN

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
10:20 A.M.	11:00 A.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
6:00 P.M.	6:40 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
8:40 A.M.	9:20 A.M.	6,7

SAIPAN TO GUAM

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
12:00 P.M.	1:00 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
2:00 P.M.	3:00 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
7:00 P.M.	8:00 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
11:00 A.M.	12:00 P.M.	6,7

GUAM TO SAIPAN

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1:30 P.M.	2:30 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
5:30 P.M.	6:30 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
9:00 P.M.	10:00 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
12:30 P.M.	1:30 P.M.	6,7

ROTA TO GUAM

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
8:20 A.M.	8:55 A.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
4:25 P.M.	5:00 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5

GUAM TO ROTA

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
9:25 A.M.	10:00 A.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
3:30 P.M.	4:05 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7)

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JUNE 1, 2022

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1301	8:30	9:00	Daily
1302	11:00	11:30	Mon/Wed/Fri
1302	12:00	12:30	Tues/Thurs/Sat/Sun
1303	15:30	16:00	Daily

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3101	9:30	10:00	Daily
3102	13:00	13:30	Tues/Thurs/Sat/Sun
3102	14:00	14:30	Mon/Wed/Fri
3103	16:30	17:00	Daily

ROTA TO GUAM

LIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3401	12:00	12:30	Mon/Wed/Fri

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
4301	13:00	13:30	Mon/Wed/Fri

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1202	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	10:00	10:15	Daily
1208	14:00	14:15	Daily
1209	15:00	15:15	Daily
1210	16:00	16:15	Daily
1211	17:00	17:15	Daily

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
2102	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	10:30	10:45	Daily
2108	14:30	14:45	Daily
2109	15:30	15:45	Daily
2110	16:30	16:45	Daily
2111	17:30	17:45	Daily

Business

Menu fit for a king at The Original Lucky Bill

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

LEIGH GASES
The Original Lucky Bill American and Thai Restaurant is located across Fire Station 2 in Garapan, ready to serve your Thai food and Thai milk tea cravings.

The extensive menu at The Original Lucky Bill American and Thai Food Restaurant is fit for a Thai king—or in this case, Saipan's foodies.

Stop by for a quick buffet or try out any one of their items on the à la carte menu and get your Thai food fix at the newly opened and renovated location across Fire Station 2 in Garapan.

For just $15, enjoy the lunch buffet that offers different Thai and American dishes, from Pad Thai, fried chicken, papaya salad, spring rolls, and more. On Fridays, unlimited Thai milk tea or iced tea is available to complement your meal.

You have the option of dining in everyday as they are open daily from 10am to 10pm and you definitely have ample time to go through and try every single item on their large-scale menu.

Their variety of scrumptious food on their à la carte menu includes 42 of the best Thai dishes—among them khao man gai Tom, which is sliced boiled chicken with marinated rice and khao man gai tot, which is a fried chicken version.

They also offer a large number of vegetarian options, breakfast items, Bill's famous burgers, sandwiches, seafood, steak, and even Mexican food, starting from $5 up to $35.

Complete your lunch or dinner with drinks that will not only quench your thirst, but have you wanting more—from their famous Thai milk tea, Thai green tea, iced lemon tea, fresh pink milk, lemon green soda, iced lemon soda, lemon honey soda, lemon pink soda, espresso, cappuccino, latte, Americano, and mocha.

Part-owner Adul Detdon welcomes patrons to the restaurant named after his son, Lucky, and his brother-in-law, Bill, and experience the authentic Thai cuisines and hospitality, which only opened last Feb. 6.

"We want people to be happy when they come in. We welcome everyone and make sure they have a great experience with the food and with the service. Great customer service is what we aim for. If the customer is happy, I'm happy," he said.

You are sure to feel at home as you are welcomed by their friendly staff and you will definitely not feel cramped in their spacious indoor seating, or outside in the fresh air of their veranda seating.

Make reservations now or order take out at (670) 488-1977/2520.

LEIGH GASES
The Original Lucky Bill American and Thai Restaurant's $15 lunch buffet is available daily and features eat-all-you-can pad Thai, spring rolls, fried chicken, papaya salad, among other Thai/American dishes.

LEIGH GASES
The Original Lucky Bill American and Thai Restaurant part-owner Adul Detdon, left, is seen with his wife, right, and his staff inside their restaurant located in front of the Fire Station 2 in Garapan.

Toyota founder's son, who led global growth, dies at 97

TOKYO (AP)—Shoichiro Toyoda, who as a son of the company's founder oversaw Toyota's expansion into international markets, has died. He was 97.

Toyoda, the company's honorary chairman, died Tuesday of heart failure, Toyota Motor Corp. said in a statement.

He was the father of Akio Toyoda, who recently announced he was stepping down as president and chief executive to become its chairman. Shoichiro was the eldest son of Kiichiro Toyoda, who founded Toyota in 1937.

After becoming Toyota's president in 1982, Shoichiro Toyoda helped direct Toyota's transformation into a global automaker, especially in the vital U.S. market, where its brand became synonymous with quality, durability, cost performance and engineering finesse.

Both father and son experienced the difficult years of "Japan-bashing," when powerful Japanese exporters like Toyota were blamed for taking away American blue-collar jobs.

The company opted to become a member of the U.S. auto community, showing that Toyota was an asset, creating jobs and value for the American people.

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
CNMI GOVERNMENT
REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL
RPF23-OGM/CHCC No. 42300030

SUBMISSION DATE: MARCH 02, 2023 TIME: 09:00 A.M.

"2022 CHCC 176K Solar PV Design-Built Integration Project"

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED ON THE MUNIS VENDOR SELF SERVICE PORTAL (https://selfservice.dof.gov.mp/vss/) OR AT THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES, LOCATED AT HORIGUCHI BLDG, GROUND FLOOR, 123 KOPPA DI ORU & BEACH ROAD, GARAPAN, SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS ITB CAN BE MADE TO OFFICE OF GRANTS MANAGEMENT & STATE CLEARINGHOUSE, EPIPHANIO E. CABRERA JR. AT (670) 237-2200

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

THE CNMI GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

/S/ EPIPHANIO E. CABRERA, JR.
OFFICE OF GRANTS MANAGEMENT

/S/ VIVIAN M. LIZAMA
ACTING DIRECTOR, P.S.

NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION
Community Development Block Grant - Disaster Recovery
(CDBG-DR) Program

JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

NMHC JVA No.	Positions:	Salary	Opening Date	Closing Date
2023-009	CDBG-DR Housing Supervisor (1-Position)	UNGRADED $40,000.00 to $45,000.00 Per annum	February 7, 2023	February 22, 2023 4:00 PM

Employment application form, detailed job description, qualification requirements and other information can be accessed at www.nmhcgov.net and www.cnmi-cdbgdr.com.

Applicants may submit their applications through the following options: Submission at the NMHC Central Office in Garapan, Saipan; Drop Box located in front of the NMHC Central Office building; the CDBG-DR Office located on the 3rd Floor of the Ladera Building, Chalan Laulau, Beach Road; or email application and documents to officemanager@nmhcgov.net.

All applicants must complete and submit the NMHC Employment Application Form together with required documents that are listed in the Employment Application Package. Failure to provide the required documents will result in automatic disqualification. NMHC and all its properties are drug-free zones; therefore, selected applicant will be subject to pre- employment drug screening.

It is the policy of the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation (NMHC) that the merit system will be applied and administered according to the principle of equal opportunity for all citizens and nationals as defined by its personnel regulations and the Northern Marianas Commonwealth Constitution regardless of age, race, sex, religion, political affiliation or belief, marital status, disability or place of origin.

For inquiries, please contact Mr. Jacob Muna, Office Manager, at (670) 234-6866/9447 or by email to officemanager@nmhcgov.net. NMHC is a fair housing agency and an equal opportunity provider, lender and employer.

/s/
Jesse S. Palacios
Corporate Director

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
CNMI GOVERNMENT
REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL
RPF23-OGM/CHCC No. 42300030

SUBMISSION DATE: MARCH 02, 2023 TIME: 09:00 A.M.

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/S/ EPIPHANIO E. CABRERA, JR.
OFFICE OF GRANTS MANAGEMENT

/S/ VIVIAN M. LIZAMA
ACTING DIRECTOR, P.S.

Nation

Slain students were 'incredibly loved,' 'tremendous' leaders

EAST LANSING, Mich. (AP)—One student was a fraternity chapter president. Another was a science student with fond memories of her days as a high-school athlete — and the third was a frequent volunteer who wanted to become a surgeon.

Family and friends mourned the deaths of three Michigan State University students killed in a Monday night shooting that critically wounded five others. Anthony McRae — the 43-year-old gunman with a previous gun violation — fatally shot himself hours later when police, alerted by a tipster who recognized the suspect in photos, confronted him about 5 miles (8047 meters) away from the East Lansing campus.

All three students who were killed came from the suburban Detroit area. The names of the five who were injured have not been released.

AP

A student kneels where flowers are being left at the Spartan Statue on the grounds of Michigan State University, in East Lansing, Mich., Tuesday, Feb. 14, 2023.

Among those killed was Alexandria Verner, a junior from Clawson, whose LinkedIn profile said she was studying integrated biology and anthropology.

A 2020 graduate of Clawson High School, Verner "was and is incredibly loved by everyone," district Superintendent Billy Shellenbarger said in a statement Tuesday. "She was a tremendous student, athlete, leader and exemplified kindness every day of her life.

"If you knew her, you loved her and we will forever remember the lasting impact she has had on all of us," Shellenbarger said, adding that Verner's parents, sister and brother were "grieving but are certainly already feeling the uplifting support of this tremendous community. "

Verner's Twitter bio says, "Can't stop dreaming," and features photos and videos from Clawson basketball and volleyball games.

Hundreds of mourners flowed onto a suburban Detroit high school football field Tuesday night to light candles and reminisce about Verner in a vigil led by Shellenbarger.

Those in attendance also observed a 24-second moment of silence in honor of Verner, who wore jersey No. 24 while she was a basketball player at Clawson High.

"While you are silent," Shellenbarger said over the public-address system, "think about her smile, think about that hero that was among us for 20 years."

Also killed was Brian Fraser, a sophomore who attended Grosse Pointe South High School.

Fraser was president of Michigan State's chapter of Phi Delta Theta fraternity, which said in a statement Tuesday that its members were "heartbroken."

"Brian was our leader, and we loved him," the fraternity said. "He cared deeply about his Phi Delt brothers, his family, Michigan State University, and Phi Delta Theta. We will greatly miss Brian and mourn his death deeply as our chapter supports each other during this difficult time."

University police identified the third victim as Arielle Anderson, a junior who graduated from Grosse Pointe North High School.

"As much as we loved her, she loved us and others even more," her family said in a statement. "She was passionate about helping her friends and family, assisting children and serving people." They described her as "sweet and loving," with an "infectious smile."

Anderson was pushing to graduate early from Michigan State, hoping to become a surgeon as quickly as possible, the statement said.

"We are absolutely devastated by this heinous act of violence upon her and many other innocent victims," her family said.

Jon Dean, superintendent of the Grosse Pointe schools, mourned the loss of his district's former students in an open letter.

"I can't even process what I just wrote," Dean said. "It is with a great deal of sadness that I bring this news to you and my thoughts go out to the many families that are suffering from another senseless act of violence."

In Trump probe, US seeks to pierce attorney-client privilege

WASHINGTON (AP)—Justice Department prosecutors investigating the mishandling of classified documents at Donald Trump's Florida estate are seeking to pierce the attorney-client privilege and want to again question one of the former president's lawyers before a grand jury, a person familiar with the matter said Tuesday night.

The privilege protects lawyers from having to tell prosecutors about confidential conversations their clients have with them. But prosecutors can get around that privilege if they can convince a judge that the communications they want information about were made in furtherance of a crime — a principle known as the crime-fraud exception.

Prosecutors have already questioned M. Evan Corcoran before a grand jury, but he repeatedly invoked attorney-client privilege in declining to answer certain questions, according to the person who spoke with The Associated Press and insisted on anonymity to discuss an ongoing investigation. They're seeking to question him again, and want to be able to move past attorney-client privilege, the person said.

The request from prosecutors working with special counsel Jack Smith is expected to lead to closed-door arguments before the chief judge of the District of Columbia federal court about whether prosecutors can compel Corcoran to answer their questions about his conversations with Trump.

It is not the first time during the course of the investigation prosecutors have raised the specter of criminal conduct in connection with the Mar-a-Lago investigation. Last August the Justice Department revealed in a search warrant affidavit that it had probable cause to investigate the unlawful retention of national defense information as well as efforts to obstruct that probe.

It remains unclear whether Trump or anyone else will be charged, though the move is a notably aggressive act by Smith's team. A war crimes prosecutor who previously led the Justice Department's public corruption section, Smith is separately investigating efforts by Trump and his allies to overturn the results of the 2020 election and recently subpoenaed former Vice President Mike Pence as part of that probe.

A spokesman for Smith did not return a call seeking comment Tuesday night, and Corcoran did not return an email seeking comment.

Trump's lawyers and representatives have featured prominently for months in the investigation into the retention by Trump of roughly 300 documents with classified markings at Mar-a-Lago. The Justice Department issued a subpoena last May to recover any remaining classified documents at Mar-a-Lago, but officials who visited the property were given a folder containing only about three dozen records.

One of Trump's lawyers, Christina Bobb, signed a letter stating that a "diligent search" had been conducted for classified documents and that all such records had been returned to the government. She told FBI investigators in an interview last fall that she had had not drafted the letter and that Corcoran was the one who prepared it and asked her to sign it in her role as custodian of records.

But Justice Department say they subsequently developed evidence that led them to suspect that additional classified records remained at the property. FBI agents returned in August with a search warrant, removing roughly 100 documents with classified markings.

The New York Times first reported that the Justice Department was seeking to pierce attorney-client privilege.

Latest downed objects could well be 'benign,' US says

WASHINGTON (AP)—The three still-unidentified aerial objects shot down by the U.S. in the past week likely had merely a "benign purpose," the White House acknowledged Tuesday, drawing a distinction between them and the massive Chinese balloon that earlier traversed the U.S. with a suspected goal of surveillance.

"The intelligence community is considering as a leading explanation that these could just be balloons tied to some commercial or benign purpose," said White House national security spokesman John Kirby.

Officials also disclosed that a missile fired at one of the three objects, over Lake Huron on Sunday, missed its intended target and landed in the water before a second one successfully hit.

The new details came as the Biden's administration's actions over the past two weeks faced fresh scrutiny in Congress.

First, U.S. fighter jets didn't shoot down what officials described as a Chinese spy balloon until after had crossed much of the United States, citing safety concerns. Then the military deployed F-22 fighters with heat-seeking missiles to quickly shoot down what likely were harmless objects.

Taken together, the actions raised political as well as security questions, about whether the Biden administration overreacted after facing Republican criticism for reacting too slowly to the big balloon.

Even as more information about the three objects emerges, questions remain about what they were, who sent them and how the U.S. might respond to unidentified airborne objects in the future.

Still unaddressed are questions about the original balloon, including what spying capabilities it had and whether it was transmitting signals as it flew over sensitive military sites in the United States. It was believed by American intelligence to have initially been on a track toward the U.S. territory of Guam, according to a U.S. official.

The U.S. tracked it for several days after it left China, said the official, who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive intelligence. It appears to have been blown off its initial trajectory and ultimately flew over the continental U.S., the official said.

Balloons and other unidentified objects have been previously spotted over Guam, a strategic hub for the U.S. Navy and Air Force in the western Pacific.

Asia

Taiwan threatens to shoot down any Chinese balloons

AP

In this photo released by the Taiwan Ministry of National Defense, Major general Huang Wen-chi, the assistant deputy chief of general staff for intelligence speaks during a press conference in Taipei, Taiwan, Tuesday, Feb. 14, 2023.

BEIJING (AP)—Amid speculation over alleged Chinese spy balloons, Taiwan's Defense Ministry said Tuesday it would shoot down any suspected military object coming close to its shores from mainland China.

Maj. Gen. Huang Wen-chi, the assistant deputy chief of general staff for intelligence, told reporters that the self-governing island was on guard for any incursions, but had yet to find any that had penetrated its defenses.

Balloons found so far around Taiwan were used for meteorological exploration, he said. They were relatively small and light and would burst after rising to an altitude that could be threatening. Taiwan has yet to find targets requiring a lethal response, he said.

"We haven't seen such sophisticated spy balloons sent by the Chinese Communist Party in the waters near Taiwan," Huang said, referring to the balloon shot down by the U.S. earlier this month after traveling for days from above Alaska to South Carolina.

China, which claims Taiwan as its territory to be reunited by force if necessary, regularly sends fighter jets and other military assets into Taiwan's airspace and sea lanes.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin called the U.S. downing of the Chinese balloon a "clear overreaction." Beijing says it was an unmanned airship made for meteorological research that had been blown off course.

The U.S. military had engaged an "absurd and costly large-scale political performance art show. We also advise the U.S. side to be careful about overexerting itself and spraining its back," Wang said at a daily news briefing.

China's Xi expresses support for Iran amid Western pressure

BEIJING (AP)—Chinese leader Xi Jinping expressed support for Iran during a visit Tuesday by its president as Tehran tries to expand relations with Beijing and Moscow to offset Western sanctions over its nuclear development.

The official Chinese account of Xi's meeting with Ebrahim Raisi gave no indication whether they discussed Russia's attack on Ukraine. Tehran supplied military drones to Russian President Vladimir Putin's government but says they were delivered before the war began.

Xi expressed support for Raisi's government in language Beijing uses to criticize Washington's domination of global affairs. China and Iran portray themselves, alongside Moscow, as counterweights to American power.

"China supports Iran in safeguarding national sovereignty" and "resisting unilateralism and bullying," Xi said in a statement carried by Chinese state TV on its website.

Xi and Raisi attended the signing of 20 cooperation agreements including trade and tourism, the Chinese government announced. Those add to a 25-year strategy agreement signed in 2021 to cooperate in developing oil, industry and other fields.

China is one of the biggest buyers of Iranian oil and a source of investment.

Iran has struggled for years under trade and financial sanctions imposed by Washington and other Western governments over what they say is Tehran's efforts to develop nuclear weapons, an accusation the Iranian government denies. The United States government cut off Iran's access to the network that connects global banks in 2018.

U.S. State Department spokesperson Ned Price urged China to influence Iran and lower potential threats in the region, saying that "would be in both of our interests."

"The PRC has a role to play in very clearly signaling to Iran that its destabilizing activities—that its brinksmanship—is not going to be rewarded, it's not going to be countenanced. It is not something that the international community is prepared to sit idly by and watch," Price said Tuesday to reporters in Washington, referring to China by its official name, the People's Republic of China.

Xi said Beijing "opposes external forces interfering in Iran's internal affairs and undermining Iran's security and stability," according to the government statement. It said Xi promised to "work together on issues involving each other's core interests," but gave no details.

World

Kyiv clamors for fighter jets as war nears 'critical' phase

BRUSSELS (AP)—Ukraine on Tuesday renewed its appeal to Western countries for fighter jets to help frustrate Moscow's almost year-long invasion, but won no assurances at a high-level defense meeting in Brussels that it would receive any combat aircraft.

"I don't have any announcements on aircraft to make today," U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin told reporters after chairing a meeting of the Ukraine Defense Contact group at NATO headquarters, where 54 countries were represented.

Even so, Ukraine's allies pledged more weapons, ammunition and tanks as senior defense officials at the meeting said the war with Russia is approaching a critical stage.

"This isn't about one single capability," Austin told a press conference, referring to the warplanes. "It's about delivering all the capabilities that we promised. It's about integrating these systems together."

The first challenge, he said, is to make sure all the military aid is used effectively.

"It's a monumental task to bring all those systems together and get the troops trained on those platforms," he said.

As Moscow musters its forces for a potential push in eastern Ukraine, Austin said Kyiv could launch its own offensive in the spring.

With the war set to enter its second year at the end of next week, Ukraine Defense Minister Oleksiy Reznikov was in Brussels to press his country's case for fighter jets, holding up an image of a warplane when asked what military aid his country is seeking.

Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy pushed hard for combat planes last week when he visited London, Paris and Brussels on just his second foreign trip since Russia invaded on Feb. 24, 2022. His plea came days after Western allies pledged to provide Kyiv with tanks.

Moscow's forces have been pressing in the east of Ukraine while bolstering their defensive lines in the south. The war has been largely static during the winter months, though both sides are expected to launch offensives when the weather improves.

Ukraine's dogged resistance and Western weapons and intelligence have helped thwart the Kremlin's ambitions of securing the entire eastern Donbas region. But the risk remains that in some areas Kyiv's forces could be overwhelmed by the sheer weight of Russian troop numbers.

Gen. Mark Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said Russian forces are "struggling mightily" and making only slow progress in the Donbas. "However, they do have numbers" to keep fighting, Milley said.

Putin was hoping Western support for Kyiv would fizzle out, Austin, the U.S. defense secretary, said.

"Today's meeting comes at a critical time," Austin said. "The Kremlin is still betting that it can wait us out."

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg, asked when he expects Russia's so-called spring offensive to begin, said that "the reality is that we have seen the start already."

"For me, this just highlights the importance of timing. It's urgent to provide Ukraine with more weapons," he told reporters in Brussels.

Another issue occupying the minds of NATO allies is how to keep up a steady supply of ammunition to Ukraine without depleting their own stockpiles.

Kenya seeks divine help to end crippling, ongoing drought

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP)—With the prospect of a sixth consecutive failed rainy season in the east and Horn of Africa, Kenya's president is hoping the heavens will finally open with the help of a national day of mass prayer on Tuesday.

William Ruto announced the plans for the country's first ever day of prayer on Sunday at a service in the drought-stricken city of Nakuru, some 100 miles (160 kilometers) from the capital Nairobi. It follows a joint call by the country's spiritual leaders to dedicate an entire day to prayer to ease drought conditions in the nation.

Ruto's own ambitious economic revival strategy for the country is also dependent on a successful rainy season.

"As a government we have set out elaborate plans for food security, we have seeds, ample fertilizer, and water harvesting strategies including dams. We now need God to send us the rain," Ruto said. "I urge all people from all faiths ... to pray for our country."

Kenya and other east African nations have been experiencing some of the worst drought conditions in decades, causing crop failure, loss of livestock, wildlife and biodiversity, and malnutrition. Domestic agriculture is a large part of Kenya's economy.

The U.N. humanitarian agency has termed the ongoing drought in the region a "rapidly unfolding humanitarian catastrophe."

Meteorologists say human-caused climate change has been exacerbating the extreme conditions.

"It is time we started including climate change as factor in our development plans," Evans Mukolwe, former director of the Kenyan and U.N. weather agencies, told The Associated Press. "The current drought which we warned about some years ago has wider ramifications on the social economic conditions of the region including peace, security, and political stability."

Mukolwe added that climate change has contributed to below average rainy seasons in the region for about three decades.

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development's climate center said that since 2020, five rainy seasons have failed, affecting over 50 million people. The center will release its projections for the long rains season, typically from March to May, later in February. Early projections from other meteorological groups are not optimistic.

Around the world people from different faiths have often sought divine intervention for rain or other favorable weather. Last summer Milan's Archbishop made a pilgrimage to three churches in hopes of ending the country's dry spell and Utah's governor called for citizens to pray for rain ahead of a weekend of extreme heat.

Some Kenyans intend to heed the president's call.

Nairobi business owner Millicent Nyambura said she supported the idea, "even though it will affect my colleagues in the flower business who expect to boost sales on Valentine's Day."

Environment

UN chief: Rising seas risk 'death sentence' for some nations

UNITED NATIONS (AP)—The United Nations chief warned Tuesday that global sea levels have risen faster since 1900 and their relentless increase puts countries like Bangladesh, China, India and the Netherlands at risk and acutely endangers nearly 900 million people living in low-lying coastal areas.

In a grim speech to the Security Council's first-ever meeting on the threat to international peace and security from rising sea levels, Secretary-General Antonio Guterres declared that sea levels will rise significantly even if global warming is "miraculously" limited to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit), the elusive international goal.

He warned the Earth is more likely on a path to warming that amounts to "a death sentence" for countries vulnerable to that rise, including many small island nations.

In addition to threatened countries, Guterres said, "mega-cities on every continent will face serious effects, including Cairo, Lagos, Maputo, Bangkok, Dhaka, Jakarta, Mumbai, Shanghai, Copenhagen, London, Los Angeles, New York, Buenos Aires and Santiago."

The U.N. chief stressed that every fraction of a degree in global warming counts, since sea level rise could double if temperatures rise by 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit), and could increase exponentially with further temperature increases.

The World Meteorological Organization released data Tuesday spelling out the grave danger of rising seas, Guterres said.

"Global average sea levels have risen faster since 1900 than over any preceding century in the last 3,000 years," he said. "The global ocean has warmed faster over the past century than at any time in the past 11,000 years."

According to the data cited by Guterres, the global mean sea level will rise by about 2 to 3 meters (about 6.5 to 9.8 feet) over the next 2,000 years if warming is limited to 1.5 degrees Celsius. With a 2-degree Celsius increase, seas could rise up to 6 meters (19.7 feet), and with a 5-degree Celsius increase, seas could rise up to 22 meters (72 feet), according to the WMO.

"Our world is hurtling past the 1.5-degree warming limit that a livable future requires, and with present policies, is careening towards 2.8 degrees—a death sentence for vulnerable countries," Guterres said.

The consequences are unthinkable, Guterres said. Low-lying communities and entire countries could disappear, the world would witness a mass exodus of entire populations on a biblical scale, and competition would become ever fiercer for fresh water, land and other resources.

Guterres has been trying to call the world's attention to the dangers posed by climate change, to spur action.

In October, he warned that the world is in "a life-or-death struggle" for survival as "climate chaos gallops ahead" and accused the world's 20 wealthiest countries of failing to do enough to stop the planet from overheating. In November, he said the planet is heading toward irreversible "climate chaos" and urged global leaders to put the world back on track to cut emissions, keep promises on climate financing and help developing countries speed their transition to renewable energy.

AP

Sukarman walks on a flooded pathway outside his house in Timbulsloko, Central Java, Indonesia, July 30, 2022.

The landmark Paris agreement adopted in 2015 to address climate change called for global temperatures to rise a maximum of 2 degrees Celsius by the end of the century compared to pre-industrial times, and as close as possible to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Guterres said the world must address the climate crisis as the root cause of rising seas, and the Security Council has a critical role to play in building the political will required.

The Security Council meeting, organized by Malta, which holds the council presidency this month, heard speakers from some 75 countries, large and small, endangered and landlocked, all voicing concern about the impact of the contining rising seas on the future of the world—and for some, the survival of their own countries.

Samoa's U.N. ambassador, Fatumanava-o-Upolu III Pa'olelei Luteru, speaking on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States which he chairs, told the council: "There is a litany of new examples of the sudden and slow onset impact of climate change on small islands, from king tides, to super hurricanes to the unstoppable and unprecedented rise in sea levels."

The impact on people and the economies of the islands "will continue to be extraordinary," he said, raising issues of their survival and continuation as states.

Alliance members "are among the lowest emitters of greenhouse gases that drive climate change and sea level rise. Yet, we face some of the most severe consequences of rising sea levels," Lutero said. "To expect small island state to shoulder the burden of sea level rise, without assistance from the international community will be the pinnacle of inequities."

He said that cooperation to address rising seas is "a legal obligation" for every country, and that there is an urgent need for nations to fulfill their international commitments on climate change and finance.

Ambassador Amatlain Kabua of the Marshall Islands said many of the tools to address climate change and rising seas are already in from of the Security Council, and "more focused action from the international system can be invited." But she said, "What is needed most in the political will to start the job, supported by a U.N. special representative" to spur global action.

U.S. Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield said that "the threat of sea level rise is real, it is a direct result of our climate crisis, and it is a matter of international peace and security."

"The council must take action," she said, pointing to the threat of hundreds of millions in low-lying coastal areas losing their homes, livelihoods and communities.

"Fortunately, the worst impacts can be avoided, but we have to act now, and we have to act together," Thomas-Greenfield said.

General Assembly President Csaba Kőrösi said, "At the current rate, sea levels will be 1 to 1.6 meters higher by 2100, according to the World Climate Research Program."

"In the Nile and Mekong Deltas—some of the richest agricultural regions in the world—ten to twenty percent of arable land will sink beneath the waves," he said.

"Climate induced sea-level rise is also provoking new legal questions that are at the very core of national and state identity. What happens to a nation's sovereignty—including U.N. membership—if it sinks beneath the sea?" he asked.

"Science tells us that whether cities or countries disappear depends on whether we as humans counteract the threat," Kőrösi said.

EPA awards $1B to clean up 22 toxic waste sites nationwide

WASHINGTON (AP)—Projects to clean up 22 toxic waste sites across the country will receive $1 billion from the federal Superfund program to help clear a backlog of hazardous sites such as landfills, mines and manufacturing facilities, the Environmental Protection Agency said Friday.

The money is the second installment in $3.5 billion appropriated under the 2021 infrastructure law signed by President Joe Biden. Sites targeted for cleanup include a lead-contaminated neighborhood on Atlanta's Westside and a former dry cleaning solvents distributor in Tampa, Florida.

The money also will be used to speed cleanup of 100 ongoing Superfund projects across the United States, the EPA said. The agency has vowed to clear a longtime backlog in the Superfund program, which was established in 1980 to clean up sites contaminated with hazardous substances. The program has languished for years because of a lack of funding.

The EPA announced an initial $1 billion in funding from the infrastructure law in December 2021.

While the agency is moving faster to clean up contaminated sites in communities across the country, "our work is not yet finished," EPA Administrator Michael Regan said in a statement Friday. "We're continuing to build on this momentum to ensure that communities living near many of the most serious uncontrolled or abandoned releases of contamination finally get the investments and protections they deserve."

Of the new cleanup sites announced on Friday, 60% are in low-income or minority communities that are chronically over-polluted, Regan said.

Thousands of contaminated sites exist across the country as a result of hazardous waste being dumped—often illegally—left out in the open, or otherwise improperly managed, including in manufacturing facilities, processing plants, landfills and mining sites.

Superfund cleanups help transform contaminated properties and create jobs in overburdened communities, while repurposing these sites for a wide range of uses, including public parks, retail businesses, office space, homes and solar power generation, EPA said.

Besides the Atlanta and Tampa projects, money also will go to a groundwater contamination site in Indianapolis, a former tannery in Danvers, Massachusetts, and a former metal stamping and tool and die shop near St. Louis. The funding also includes new cleanup of a former General Motors foundry in Upstate New York that has been on the Superfund list since 1984. The site in Massena has long been contaminated by toxic chemicals known as PCBs and other pollutants.

In all, new projects in 14 states and Puerto Rico will receive funding, EPA said.

About $50 million will go to clean up lead contamination in a residential neighborhood in Atlanta. The Westside project has been waiting for years to access federal funds. Experts say it's unclear exactly where the lead came from, but it is likely from metal foundries that were once common on Atlanta's Westside.

The cleanup money "couldn't come soon enough," Sen. Raphael Warnock, D-Ga., said on a conference call Friday with Regan and other officials. "This accelerated timeline would not be possible without this historic investment."

Similarly, a project in Tampa was identified as a Superfund site in 1999 but remains contaminated, said Rep. Kathy Castor, D-Fla.

The site is near where she and her husband got married, Castor said. In an apparent nod to Warnock's status as a pastor, Castor said that while "it's important to have faith, there's nothing like having resources" to clean up pollution.

Life & Style

Idris Elba on James Bond: 'I'm not going to be that guy'

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP)—Actor Idris Elba says he's going to stick with being the tormented detective John Luther—not James Bond.

Speaking Tuesday to the World Government Summit in Dubai, Elba brought up the persistent discussions about him taking over as Ian Fleming's famed British spy. Those had grown louder after Daniel Craig's demise as Bond in the 25th film in the franchise called "No Time to Die."

Asked about his upcoming film based on the British series "Luther," Elba clearly took himself out of playing 007.

"It's very dark," Elba said of the series. "We've been working on the television show for about 10 years and so the natural ambition is to take it to the big screen, and so we're here with the first movie."

Elba

He added: "You know, a lot of people talk about another character that begins with 'J' and ends with 'B,' but I'm not going to be that guy. I'm going to be John Luther. That's who I am."

"Luther: The Fallen Sun" is due to come out in American theaters on Feb. 24, then stream on Netflix beginning March 10. It also co-stars Andy Serkis and other actors from the television series.

Elba, 50, is known for a variety of television and film roles, ranging from Stringer Bell on the American television series "The Wire" and the recent movie "Beast."

While on stage, Elba discussed an upcoming film he's working on with the American actor and wrestler John Cena called "The Heads of State."

"He plays the American president. I play the British prime minister," Elba said. "We get into a caper. I'm very excited about doing that because leadership comes in many different forms."

In recent weeks, Elba has appeared at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, where he and his wife Sabrina Dhowre Elba received an award for their work on food security in Africa. Elba also has worked as an anti-crime ambassador with his "Don't Stab Your Future" initiative in the United Kingdom, where he grew up in east London.

During his talk, Elba urged nations to invest more in creative industries, saying it can provide an economic engine that provides jobs to their youth. In particular, he said creative jobs could greatly help countries in Africa.

"I believe that Africa, especially as a continent, needs to hold a narrative, change a narrative," he said.

Discussing storytelling, Elba also praised Dubai for its "incredible tourism story" that it has developed over the last decades. The city-state is seeing a new real estate boom, fueled in part by Russian cash amid Moscow's war on Ukraine.

Pharrell named new Louis Vuitton menswear creative director

NEW YORK (AP)—Louis Vuitton has named multitalented singer-songwriter-philanthropist Pharrell Williams creative director of its menswear division, replacing the late Virgil Abloh, the company said Tuesday.

"Pharrell Williams is a visionary whose creative universes expand from music, to art and to fashion—establishing himself as a cultural, global icon over the past 20 years," the luxury house said in a statement.

Word on the appointment first broke in The Wall Street Journal and Le Figaro.

Williams

The "Happy" singer is a 13-time Grammy winner and two-time Oscar nominee with experience working with luxury brands and designers like the late Karl Lagerfeld.

The appointment is effective immediately. Williams' first collection is scheduled to be shown during Paris Men's Fashion Week in June.

The position had been left vacant since November 2021, when Abloh died of cancer at age 41. He was a groundbreaking designer and tastemaker known for merging streetwear and high fashion.

Abloh's ubiquitous, consumer-friendly presence in culture was wide-ranging and dynamic. Some compared him to Jeff Koons. Others hailed him as his generation's Lagerfeld, Chanel's longtime creative director who died in 2019. Abloh was the first Black director of menswear at Louis Vuitton, one of France's most storied fashion houses.

After Abloh's death, the brand carried on with splashy men's shows, largely without a creative director. Abloh, a DJ and founder of the brand Off-White, turned the job at Louis Vuitton into that of "curator," rather than simply "designer," as he expanded his interests into housewares, art, jewelry, industrial design and architecture.

Two California-based freelance journalists win $100,000 prizes

NEW YORK (AP)—Two California-based freelance journalists were awarded the American Mosaic Journalism Prize, giving them $100,000 each for their work, it was announced on Wednesday.

The Heising-Simons Foundation gives the annual prize for excellence in long-form journalism about underrepresented groups in the United States. The foundation said it is the largest dollar prize given annually for journalism in the U.S.

Cerise Castle, a journalist from Los Angeles, won for her investigative piece, "A Tradition of Violence," which looked at gangs within the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, the foundation said.

Her story first appeared in Knock LA, a nonprofit community journalism project, and quickly spread, including an article on NPR. The story last year received the American Journalism Online Award for best use of public records.

The other award went to Carvell Wallace, a writer and podcaster based in Oakland. He was honored for a piece that appeared on Medium, "What if My Mother Had An Abortion," exploring how her life would have been different if she hadn't had him. Judges also cited his story on Black cyclist Justin Williams that appeared in Bicycling magazine.

"I've long thought that the only thing that really matters is how we treat each other," Wallace said. "I view everything through this lens, whether it's sports, culture, politics, art or film."

German ballet director issues apology over feces attack

BERLIN (AP)—A German ballet director issued a public apology on Tuesday for smearing dog feces on the face of a newspaper critic whose reviews he had taken exception to.

Marco Goecke was suspended from his post as ballet chief at the Hannover state opera following the weekend incident. T he theater's management called on him Monday to apologize "comprehensively" and explain himself.

According to the daily Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Goecke approached its dance critic, Wiebke Huester, during the interval of a premiere at the opera house on Saturday and asked what she was doing there.

The newspaper said that Goecke, who apparently felt provoked by a recent review she wrote of a production he staged in the Netherlands, threatened to ban her from the ballet and accused her of being responsible for people canceling season tickets in Hannover. He then pulled out a paper bag with the feces and smeared her face with the contents.

"I would like to apologize sincerely to all concerned, first and foremost to Ms. Huester, for my absolutely unacceptable act," Goecke said in a written statement. "In retrospect, I am clearly aware that this was a disgraceful act in the heat of the moment and an overreaction," he added.

However, he added that it's time for media to "rethink a certain form of destructive and hurtful reporting that damages the whole cultural sector" and criticized Huester for what he said were "often nasty reviews."

Attempt to connect with beau's daughter fizzles

DEAR ABBY: I'm divorced and have been dating my guy friend for five years. We recognized after we started dating that we love each other, and we planned to move in together after a year of dating. I was so excited when we started making plans that I reached out to my guy's ex-wife and daughter as a friendly gesture.

His daughter was getting married later in the year, so I tried to reassure her that I understood how stressful a big wedding is, and I wouldn't be offended if I wasn't invited. I wasn't invited. Following the wedding, the first time I met his ex-wife and children was excruciating. His daughter was very unpleasant to me.

Now, years later, the situation has not improved. If I try to be Facebook friends, his daughter accepts my offer, but limits what I can see. This is ridiculous. After five years, I would like to just gently close that door. Is that being mean or realistic?

TRIED, AND TRIED AGAIN

DEAR TRIED: When you reached out to your partner's daughter, perhaps you came on a little too strong. It seems like a warm and caring gesture, unless your relationship was the reason his marriage ended. Have you talked to your partner about it? Perhaps he can help. This situation won't improve if you "gently close the door." You don't need to track his adult daughter's activities on Facebook. (If she hated you, she would block you entirely.) It couldn't hurt to step back and stick with the status quo, and that's what I recommend.

C■■■■

DEAR ABBY: My husband and I have been together 30 years and married for 25. We have four wonderful adult children and four beautiful grandchildren. We started our family very young and are now entering our 50s. I'm ready to get out and travel the world, but my husband wants to move closer to one of our children to help with the kids. We have had many loud conversations regarding my unwillingness to raise children all over again. I love my grandchildren, but having been a mother since I was 16, I'm enjoying my newfound freedom.

Our son and his wife both have successful careers. They can afford quality child care, and I don't see the need for us to uproot our lives and move hours away just to be on-call babysitters. I love the town we live in, and I'm starting to resent his relentless "persuasion" and suggestions that relocation is what "most grandmothers would love to do." Advice?

STAYING PUT IN FLORIDA

DEAR STAYING: Having raised four wonderful children since the age of 16, your feelings are understandable. I will assume that your husband wants to uproot your lives because he is retired and has nothing meaningful to occupy his time. Please do not allow him to wear you down if you are not equally enthusiastic about becoming an on-call babysitter. You deserve to travel if you have the means to do it. He could take that time to travel to wherever your son and his family live and give them a break in your absence. That way you will both be doing something you enjoy.

■■■■

DEAR ABBY
BY ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

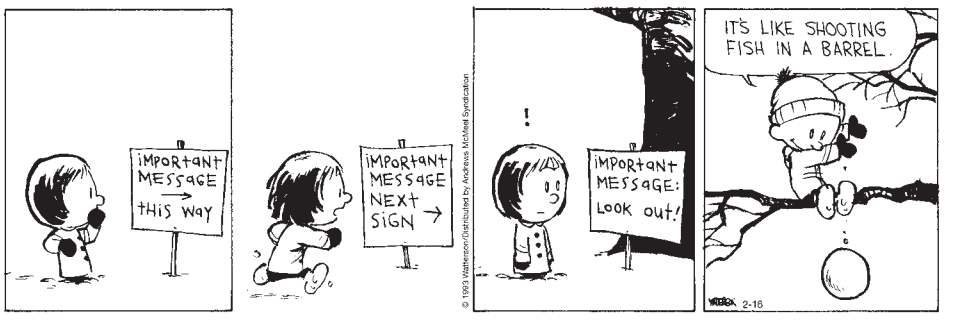
Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Good advice for everyone – teens to seniors – is in "The Anger in All of Us and How to Deal With It." To order, send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby, Anger Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson


IMPORTANT MESSAGE → THIS WAY
IMPORTANT MESSAGE NEXT SIGN →
IMPORTANT MESSAGE: LOOK OUT!
IT'S LIKE SHOOTING FISH IN A BARREL.
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WATTERSON 2-16

Garfield®

By Jim Davis

THE ADVENTURES OF JON ARBUCKLE!
JIM DAVIS 2-16
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OKAY, SO THE PLOT'S A LITTLE THIN
Distributed by Andrews McMeel Syndication

Adam@home

By Bryan Basset

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy

IS IT THE DOG DAYS OF WINTER YET?
2-16
THERE ARE NO DOG DAYS OF WINTER.
POOP.
GLENN MCCOY
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SO THEN, I GUESS A FOOT RUB WOULD BE OUT OF THE QUESTION.

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Pub potables
5 Campus mil. group
9 Sailor's chart
12 Casual shirt
13 Ornamental jug
14 Parisian pal
15 Emmy-winning Food Network chef
17 Paris appellation
18 Takes the helm
19 Talking points?
21 Exists
22 Surplus
24 Tear canal
27 Rowing need
28 Pleased
31 Spanish gold
32 "... cone — cup?"
33 "Exodus" hero
34 Vogue rival
36 Layer
37 Memory unit
38 Raiment
40 Little — Peep
41 Sorts
43 Falsified, as figures
47 "Friendly skies" co.
48 Broadcasting lag
51 Bikini half
52 Cupid's alias
53 Clinton's vice president
54 Whatever
55 Stretches (out)
56 iPhone downloads

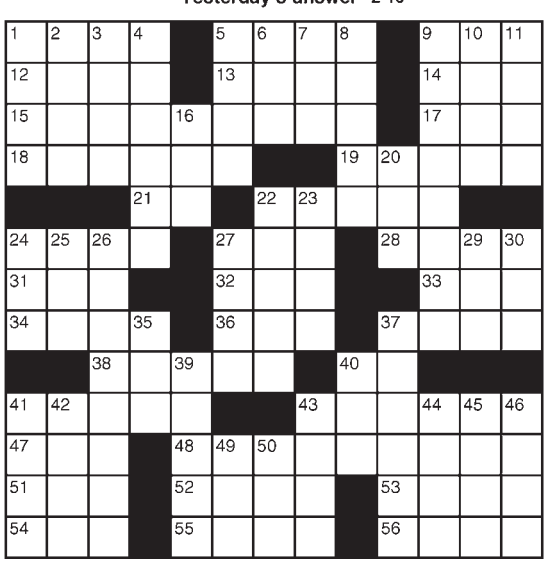
DOWN

1 LAPD alerts
2 Booty
3 North Sea feeder
4 "Amen!"
5 Umps
6 Hooting bird
7 Afternoon get-together
8 Burial chamber
9 Kipling poem
10 Mine, in Marseille
11 Fine cotton
16 Decade parts (Abbr.)
20 Assoc.
22 British nobles
23 MRI forerunner
24 Anonymous Jane
25 Online address
26 "Yellow" band
27 "Clumsy me!"
29 Illustrations
30 Conk out
35 Before
37 Grocery store
39 Lauder of cosmetics
40 Future flower
41 Oompah band member
42 Knitting fiber
43 Own (up)
44 Icky stuff
45 Lawman Wyatt
46 Turns blue?
49 Genesis vessel
50 "The Bells" author

Solution time: 24 mins.

I	G	O	R		R	I	M		A	M	I	S
S	O	L	E		E	L	I		G	A	S	P
M	U	D	P	A	C	K	S		I	K	E	A
S	T	E	E	L	E		S	A	T	E	E	N
			L	A	D		Y	E	A	S		
Y	O	M		N	E	A		S	T	P	A	T
T	A	O	S		D	I	A		E	A	R	S
D	R	U	I	D		M	S	N		R	I	P
		S	E	R	B		H	O	P			
O	D	E	S	S	A		R	E	I	G	N	S
W	E	P	T		M	E	A	L	P	R	E	P
N	C	A	A		B	U	M		P	E	A	R
S	O	D	S		I	R	S		A	W	R	Y

Yesterday's answer 2-16



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: The Weeknd, 33; Elizabeth Olsen, 34; Ice-T, 65; LeVar Burton, 66.

Happy Birthday: Set high standards, forge ahead and refuse to let changes others make throw you off course. Intelligence, speed and agility will help you outmaneuver anyone who gets in your way this year. Adjust your surroundings to suit your needs, making your life more convenient and your time better spent. Have patience and build a solid foundation; you will thrive. Your numbers are 7, 12, 24, 27, 31, 34, 43.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19)*: Say less and do more. Work alone, perfect what you are trying to achieve, and present and market what you have to offer. Acting in haste will put you in a vulnerable position and can cost you getting the approval you require. ✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20):* Dream on, but don't lose sight of what's possible. Be observant, and don't ignore a valid point that can help bring about change at a price you can afford. Rethink your steps and pay attention to what's within your reach. Romance is favored. ✪✪✪✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20):* It will be easier to accomplish your objective if you don't let others take over. A geographical change will entice you, but before you move or plan a trip, do your homework. A poor decision will turn into a costly mistake. ✪✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22):* Put your best foot forward. Enhance your personal life, update your image or pick up additional skills or qualifications. Discuss your plans with someone who can offer expert advice. Turn your aspiration into a reality; speak up and pursue your dream. ✪✪✪

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): Be realistic and map out a plan to help you get from one point to another without interference. Don't be afraid to make suggestions or follow through with your goals alone. Emotional spending will ruin your budget and slow down your plans. ✪✪✪

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): Take a chance and play to win. Size up situations and consider the benefits of participating in something. You'll discover how to improve your life and relationships with others. Put your energy into self-improvement, relaxation and rejuvenation. ✪✪✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22):* Make up your mind and either fork to the left or right, but don't keep switching sides or changing your mind. Discipline and hard work will get you where you want to go. Your intelligence won't let you down; step forward with confidence. ✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21):* Explore events, activities and educational pursuits and see how what you discover plays into your plans. Keeping busy and engaging in informative and affirming outings will encourage positive conversation and development. Romance is in the stars. ✪✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21):* Think; if you act in haste, you'll overstep your bounds or end up paying too much for something. Research will spare you from making a mistake. Ask questions and choose to do your own thing if it makes more sense. ✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19):* Emotions will surface regarding money matters. Be upfront; a solution will help you put things in perspective and a strategy in place. A passionate approach to living and working will make life easier. ✪✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18):* Don't sit back if you want to make an impression. Make your move with finesse. Your energy and intellect will capture someone's interest and encourage talks that can bring about positive change. Leave nothing to chance; doors will open. ✪✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20):* Learn from your mistakes, and you'll know instinctively when to make a move and when to sit tight. Sign up for projects that make a difference to those less fortunate or help to keep our planet and its inhabitants healthy and strong. ✪✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are insightful, reactive and diligent. You are knowledgeable and organized.

✪: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ✪✪: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ✪✪✪: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ✪✪✪✪: Aim high; start new projects. ✪✪✪✪✪: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

	9					8	6	
			7		9			
1			2				9	7
			3	4		2		
		3					5	
2	8		9					3
	2					3		1
		1		6	2			
	7	5		3				

Difficulty: ★★★ 2-16

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Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

3	1	4	5	2	7	8	9	6
2	7	5	6	9	8	1	3	4
9	8	6	4	3	1	7	2	5
8	6	9	3	1	4	5	7	2
1	4	3	2	7	5	6	8	9
7	5	2	9	8	6	4	1	3
6	9	8	1	4	3	2	5	7
4	3	1	7	5	2	9	6	8
5	2	7	8	6	9	3	4	1

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Difficulty: ★★★ 2-15

WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the **WONDERWORD.**

KIRSTIE ALLEY (1951-2022) **Solution: 8 letters**

G	O	R	S	S	R	E	E	H	C	W	R	O	N	G
S	C	P	I	E	R	T	A	O	B	J	O	H	N	M
C	L	S	T	C	C	E	O	W	I	C	H	I	T	A
R	O	E	C	H	H	L	K	E	C	D	K	S	E	D
E	S	Y	O	A	A	E	R	R	R	L	E	T	I	H
A	E	E	M	S	N	A	R	L	A	R	H	A	L	O
M	T	M	I	E	C	B	I	T	I	P	C	S	L	U
A	I	M	G	L	E	L	O	E	G	T	T	T	O	S
I	R	Y	Y	P	L	E	S	B	E	R	A	E	M	E
N	W	B	U	I	W	I	L	L	I	A	M	V	Q	I
E	A	R	A	O	U	E	L	L	O	V	E	E	U	T
B	Y	N	K	O	U	R	E	R	O	O	P	N	E	S
S	L	O	L	Q	U	A	R	K	U	L	S	S	E	R
C	O	L	E	T	T	E	L	A	S	T	D	O	N	I
L	N	S	V	E	R	O	N	I	C	A	S	N	S	K

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Able, Baby, Boat, Bob, Chance, Chase, Cheers, Closet, Colette, Cool, Craig, Deal, Emmy, Eyes, Howe, John, Kirstie, Last Don, Lillian, Lillie, Look, Louise, Love, Madhouse, Maine, Match, Mollie, Parker, Pier, Poorer, Quark, Queens, Richer, Scream, Sequel, Series, Sitcom, Stevenson, Syrup, Talking, Taste, Travolta, Veronica's, Waylon, Wichita, William, Write, Wrong

Yesterday's Answer: Blessings

The NEW **Volume 70** can be purchased online at www.WonderWordBooks.com, or call 1-800-642-6480.

Leonard makes it rain from deep, Clippers outshoot Warriors

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Kawhi Leonard scored 33 points, tying his career high with seven 3-pointers, and Los Angeles beat Golden State to snap a two-game skid.

Norman Powell added 24 points and Paul George had 20 points and eight assists for the Clippers, who debuted newly acquired Eric Gordon, Bones Hyland and Mason Plumlee. They helped outscore the Warriors' bench, 49-42. Gordon finished with seven points, Hyland had six and Plumlee scored eight in the teams' last game before the All-Star break.

Jordan Poole led seven Warriors in double figures with 28 points. Klay Thompson had 18 points playing the second game of a back-to-back for the first time this season. Kevon Looney had 11 points and 14 rebounds.

AP

Los Angeles Clippers forward Kawhi Leonard, right, shoots as Golden State Warriors forward Jonathan Kuminga defends during the first half of an NBA basketball game Tuesday, Feb. 14, 2023, in Los Angeles.

BUCKS 131, CELTICS 125

MILWAUKEE (AP)—Jrue Holiday matched his career high 40 points and made a go-ahead 3-pointer with 25.2 seconds left in overtime as the Milwaukee Bucks edged the short-handed Boston Celtics 131-125 on Tuesday for their 11th consecutive victory.

Giannis Antetokounmpo added 36 points, 13 rebounds and nine assists as the Bucks (40-17) moved within a half-game of the Celtics (41-17) in the Eastern Conference standings.

Boston was playing without both its All-Stars – Jayson Tatum (non-COVID illness) and Jaylen Brown (facial fracture) – as well as Marcus Smart (sprained right ankle) and Al Horford (swelling in right knee).

Wisconsin native Sam Hauser made a game-tying 3-pointer from 29 feet away with three seconds left in regulation to force overtime. Boston's Derrick White then scored the first five points of overtime, but the Bucks scored the final seven points of the game.

White, the reigning Eastern Conference player of the week, led the Celtics with 27 points. Malcolm Brogdon added 26 and Mike Muscala had 18.

SUNS 120, KINGS 109

PHOENIX (AP)—Devin Booker scored 32 points, Deandre Ayton had 29 points and 11 rebounds, and Phoenix beat Sacramento with superstar acquisition Kevin Durant watching from the bench.

It was the first home game for the Suns since they completed a trade with Brooklyn for Durant, who is recovering from a right knee injury and hasn't played since Jan. 12. He was introduced during a timeout in the third quarter and received a standing ovation. Durant is expected back sometime after this weekend's All-Star break.

Booker was 13 of 20 from the field and did not attempt a 3-pointer in 29 minutes. Chris Paul had a season-high 19 assists and scored 17 points for Phoenix, which has won 11 of its last 14. Josh Okogie scored 19 points and made a team-high three 3-pointers.

De'Aaron Fox led the Kings with 35 points, following up his 36-point performance in a win over Dallas on Saturday.

WIZARDS 126, TRAIL BLAZERS 101

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP)—Kyle Kuzma returned from an ankle sprain and scored 33 points, making six 3-pointers, to lead Washington over Portland.

Kristaps Porzingis added 28 points and 12 rebounds for the Wizards, who have won three of their last four games.

Damian Lillard had 39 points, 10 rebounds and six assists for the Blazers. Anfernee Simons added 17 points but sprained his right ankle late in the third quarter and had to be helped to the locker room.

RAPTORS 123, MAGIC 113

TORONTO (AP)—Jakob Poeltl scored 30 points, Pascal Siakam had 26 and Toronto beat Orlando for its fifth win in six games.

Scottie Barnes scored 17 points, Fred VanVleet had 10 points and a season-high 15 assists, and Precious Achiuwa had 11 points and 13 rebounds for the Raptors.

Wendell Carter Jr. scored 26 points, Jalen Suggs had 24 off the bench and Markelle Fultz scored 19 points for the Magic.

A former Raptor who was reacquired from San Antonio last week, Poeltl shot 15 for 17 and added nine rebounds. The 30 points were the most he's scored as a Raptors player. His career high is 31, set with San Antonio last Nov. 15 at Portland.

Analysis: Russell Westbrook could help NBA playoff contender

By TIM REYNOLDS
AP Basketball Writer

Nikola Jokic and Luka Doncic are doing it. So are LeBron James, James Harden and LaMelo Ball. They are among the six players in the NBA averaging at least 15 points, six rebounds and seven assists per game this season.

That's two MVP front-runners, three current All-Stars and two other players who should have been, at minimum, under All-Star consideration this season.

There's one other member of the 15-6-7 club: Russell Westbrook.

As the league gears up for it's All-Star festivities this weekend, Westbrook is deciding whether he wants to play out this season in Utah —a place where he said a fan made a racist taunt toward him four years ago, sparking an uproar—or accept a buyout after getting traded there by the Los Angeles Lakers and try to latch on with a playoff contender to finish the season.

As long as he's on another roster by March 1, he'd be playoff-eligible.

There is a market for Westbrook. And there should be.

"If there's, you know, somebody out there," Clippers forward Paul George said a few days ago when asked about his team having an open roster spot.

He paused for a couple of seconds and then said "Russell." Hey, it's not tampering if players talk about other players.

"It would definitely improve our team if we had that traditional point guard, to kind of get us in things and make the game easy," George said. "So, hopefully, Russell sees this and we figure something out."

The Clippers could use Westbrook. So could Chicago, where even Goran Dragic—the team's backup point guard—knows the Bulls need help at that spot. So could Miami, where Kyle Lowry has been sidelined of late by knee soreness.

George has a valid, reasonable argument when it comes to why he wants Westbrook on the Clippers. They have shooting. Shooting means spacing. Spacing means lanes to the basket. That's where Westbrook thrives, getting to the rim, playing fast, driving-and-attacking or driving-and-kicking.

AP

Los Angeles Lakers' Russell Westbrook brings the ball up during the second half of the team's NBA basketball game against the New York Knicks on Jan. 31, 2023, in New York.

The whole world, especially his many detractors, are very aware that Westbrook is not Stephen Curry from long range. Or Seth Curry. Or probably even Dell Curry at this point. He is not a knockdown shooter and never has been, so it's puzzling why this is some sort of argument against Westbrook.

At his best, Westbrook was a 34% 3-point shooter. On average, he's a 30% shooter from beyond the arc. This season, he's just under 30%.

The $47 million salary for this season is another source of disdain, that someone averaging what Westbrook is averaging—and wasn't even starting for a Lakers team that has spent the entire season outside of the play-in picture—sn't playing up to the level of his paycheck. But he's far from the only veteran in the NBA to have a bloated contract toward the end of the line, part of the final payoff for the deal that he earned when he was an All-NBA player, an MVP, a perennial star. He was paid what the market said he should be paid. And he is far from the only reason why the Lakers struggled in his year-plus with the team.

"It's really unfair to put the last year and a half (on) one player," Lakers general manager Rob Pelinka said.

The Clippers see an opportunity. The players in that locker room—nd surely some in other locker rooms, too—are convinced that Westbrook would make them better.

"He's one of the greatest players that ever played the game," Clippers forward Marcus Morris Sr. said.

Look at the resume: nine All-Star appearances, part of the NBA's 75th anniversary team, an MVP, two scoring titles, three assist titles, 198 triple-doubles. He has an edge, no question. He's sometimes abrupt with reporters, particularly when he doesn't like a question. He's also the man who, quietly, left a massive tip for hotel staff inside the NBA's restart bubble at Walt Disney World three years ago and urged other players to find ways to thank those people for making the bubble possible.

It's hard to find a team out there that couldn't use another 15 points, six rebounds and seven assists per game right now. If the fit is right and a buyout happens, some team could get quite a late-season boost.

"Give him an opportunity to come back," Morris said, "and he could be dangerous."

NFL takes no breaks as Chiefs' Super Bowl revelry wanes

GLENDALE, Ariz. (AP)—The Kansas City Chiefs awoke Monday still reveling in the glow of their second Super Bowl title in a four-year span, while the Philadelphia Eagles were left to lament how close they came to winning another Lombardi Trophy of their own.

The rest of the league? Well, they've been looking toward the future for a while now.

The day after the Super Bowl represents the first day of the offseason, though that's a bit of a misnomer—nobody around the NFL takes any time off. There are some hard business decisions to be made with current players, scouting that needs to be wrapped up and a game plan to formulate before the league holds its annual draft at the end of April.

The draft, coincidentally, will be in Kansas City this year.

Here's a look at what comes next now that the confetti has settled on State Farm Stadium:

AP

Confetti falls on the field as the Kansas City Chiefs celebrate after the NFL Super Bowl 57 football game against the Philadelphia Eagles Sunday, Feb. 12, 2023, in Glendale, Ariz.

FRANCHISE SITUATION

The first big date on the offseason calendar is Feb. 21, when teams can designate franchise or transition players. The tag can be given to one unrestricted free agent and guarantees another year under contract at a fixed contract.

The Chiefs did that last season with left tackle Orlando Brown Jr. when the two sides couldn't agree on a long-term deal, and it's possible Brown gets tagged a second time. Other players that could get the tag include Ravens quarterback Lamar Jackson and Commanders defensive lineman Daron Payne. The deadline for clubs to designate players is March 7.

TIME TO STUDY

The weeklong NFL scouting combine begins Feb. 28 at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis, where NFL teams will have a chance to test dozens of prospects in a single setting. Otherwise, scouts will fan out across the country beginning March 7, when individual colleges hold their pro days, and clubs can begin to host up to 30 draft-eligible players for visits.

The Bears have the first pick, though happy with quarterback Justin Fields, it's possible they trade it to a team looking for one of the top QBs available. Those begin with Alabama's Bryce Young, Ohio State's C.J. Stroud and Will Levis of Kentucky.

Other potential No. 1 picks are Georgia defensive tackle Jalen Carter and Alabama pass rusher Will Anderson Jr.

FREE AGENT FRENZY

There is a three-day window beginning March 13 in which clubs can contact and begin negotiating with free agents, and qualifying offers for restricted free agents are due by March 15. That's also the date all clubs must be under the salary cap with the new league year—and signing of players—officially beginning at 4 p.m. ET.

Jackson would be the most coveted player available if he's not franchised, though that is unlikely. Ravens linebacker Roquan Smith, Eagles defensive tackle Javon Hargrave and Bengals safety Jessie Bates III are among the top free agents on defense while Giants running back Saquon Barkley could be in line for a massive deal.

PICK ME

The next big party after the Super Bowl is the NFL draft, taking place from April 27-29 at Union Station in Kansas City. It's the first time the city will host the selection bonanza, and given the hometown Chiefs will still be celebrating a Lombardi Trophy, you can be sure the party downtown will last throughout the weekend.

GET TO WORK

Teams are allowed to hold a three-day rookie minicamp in early May, while voluntary offseason workouts last throughout the early summer. The teams will also hold a mandatory minicamp before taking a break ahead of training camp, which for most teams starts the last week of July—and ushers in the next season in earnest.

Analysis: NFL skids into offseason after slippery Super Bowl

By ARNIE STAPLETON
AP Pro Football Writer

Gratitude and brotherhood were on display at the Super Bowl, where Travis and Jason Kelce tussled for the Lombardi Trophy in a classic back-and-forth clash and Damar Hamlin received a rousing ovation during a pregame ceremony honoring the men and women who saved his life.

The feel-good vibes didn't last as long as the NFL would have liked, however.

After the NBA encroached on the NFL's biggest week by moving its trade deadline from late March to smack dab in the middle of Super Bowl week, the Kansas City Chiefs rallied past the Philadelphia Eagles 38-35 after the game took on the flavors of both MLB and the NHL.

The NFL's biggest stage looked too much like a hockey rink when State Farm Stadium lived up to its reputation of slippery fields with players from both teams having a hard time keeping their footing.

The waxy grass neutralized the vaunted pass rush for both teams, helping Patrick Mahomes and Jalen Hurts rack up points like pinball wizards at a vintage arcade.

Yet, just days after NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell declared the league's officiating better than ever, a debatable holding call just after the two-minute warning ensured there would be no chance for a fantastic finish to an otherwise scintillating Super Bowl 57.

The flag—just the ninth penalty of the game—was akin to an umpire suddenly expanding his strike zone in the ninth inning, and it drew condemnation far and wide.

The Chiefs faced third-and-8 at the Eagles 15-yard line with 1:54 remaining when Mahomes threw incomplete to JuJu Smith-Schuster. But officials flagged James Bradberry for defensive holding, which negated the incompletion and, more importantly, gave the Chiefs a first down.

Replays showed that Bradberry made light contact with Smith-Schuster, though it didn't appear to affect the play that much.

Referee Carl Cheffers said it was a "clear case of a jersey grab" and added that nobody on his crew disagreed with the penalty.

There was plenty of bickering from fans and commentators. Former NFL tight end Greg Olsen wasn't happy with the decision on the Fox broadcast and ESPN and Amazon analyst Kirk Herbstreit also was critical on social media, as were several current and former NFL players.

ESPN commentator and former NFL QB Tim Hasselbeck said it's too much to ask officials to suddenly swallow their whistles in crucial moments because fans want to see a more climactic ending to the Super Bowl.

"That to me, in a regular-season game on third-and-7, that's a flag. I don't want the officials calling it any differently because it's a tie game in the Super Bowl," Hasselbeck said. "The job is hard enough. Let's not have them all of a sudden call it differently based on, 'Hey it's a tie game, everyone at home would like a close one.'"

Kansas City was able to essentially run out the clock after the flag, giving coach Andy Reid his second Super Bowl title, this one against the team that once fired him after he couldn't win the big one in Philadelphia.

After Harrison Butker kicked a 27-yard field goal with 8 seconds remaining, the Eagles got the ball back with only the chance for a desperation heave from Hurts that didn't get anywhere near the end zone.

Despite all the consternation surrounding what many considered a ticky-tack flag, Bradberry acknowledged he committed a penalty on the pivotal play.

"It was a holding," Bradberry said. "I tugged his jersey. I was hoping they would let it slide."

Sliding was the theme of the afternoon, after all.

The Eagles' pass rushers didn't record a single sack in the Super Bowl after piling up an incredible 78 sacks on the season, including 10 in the playoffs. Hurts and Eagles tight end Dallas Goedert were among the players who changed their cleats at halftime to get better traction.

"It's not like we were playing on the on ice and they were playing on grass," Eagles coach Nick Sirianni said. "We all had to play on it, we all have to figure out our shoes."

Kansas City ready to celebrate its latest Super Bowl victory

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP)—Hundreds of thousands of fans are expected to line the streets of downtown Kansas City on Wednesday as the city celebrates the Kansas City Chiefs' second Super Bowl championship in two years.

Chiefs coach Andy Reid and Super Bowl MVP quarterback Patrick Mahomes will be joined by teammates, family and Chiefs officials as they ride in open-air vehicles down one of the city's main downtown streets.

Most schools, many businesses and some government offices in the Kansas City metro area will be closed so people can celebrate. The event starts at noon and will end with a victory rally at the city's Union Station.

Officials began planning the parade even before the Chiefs defeated the Philadelphia Eagles 38-35 Sunday on a field goal with 8 seconds remaining in the game.

Officials said that more than 19 local and area law enforcement agencies, along with fire departments and transportation leaders are ready for the anticipated crowd.

The City Council Transportation and Infrastructure Committee agreed to earmark $750,000 for parade-related expenses, and Mayor Quinton Lucas estimated overtime costs for police and firefighters would total more than $1.5 million.

The the Kansas City Sports Commission is expected to contribute another $1 million in private donations, and the Jackson County Legislature voted to add $75,000.

After decades of championship drought, the city is gaining experience with victory parades. Two years ago, the Chiefs defeated the San Francisco 49ers for the team's first Super Bowl championship in 50 years. That followed the Kansas City Royals winning the World Series in 2015, the city's first baseball championship in 30 years.

Southern United FC, Matansa FC rule 1st day of spring league

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

Southern United Football Club and Matansa Football Club barged into the season opener of the TakeCare NMIFA Youth Spring League 2023 with a winning mentality as they defeated their foes last Saturday at the NMI Soccer Training Center in Koblerville.

The girls of Southern United FC in the U14 girls division dominated Shirley's FC, 8-1, while in the U14 boys division, Matansa FC defeated Shirley's FC, 7-2.

SUFC's Rosie Saralu—2022 Fall season's U13 Golden Boot winner—led the team with five goals as she tries to make a run for another Golden Boot this season.

Teammates Brianne Echalico and Jadine Higgins assisted the team with a goal each, before Shirley's Alyssa Borlongan scored her team's lone goal. Selena Atalig added the eighth goal for SUFC in the 38th minute.

NMIFA

Shirley's Cassidee Flores, left, and Southern United FC's Rosie Saralu duke it out on the pitch in the season opener of the TakeCare NMIFA Youth Spring League 2023 at the NMI Soccer Training Center in Koblerville.

In the U14 boys game, Matansa's Anton Megino double fired at the goal for two goals only two minutes apart, followed by a goal by Justin Garden.

Shirley's Mayten Pino then found an opening in the 15th minute to put one up on the board. An own goal was then made for a tied 2-2 game, but fortunately, three more goals were made by Matansa to secure the lead and win the game.

MP United FC Team-2 Pink 6, Kanoa FC Team-2 1

MP United FC Team-2 beat Kanoa FC Team-2, 6-1, led by Taiga Namai-Scoggins' hat-trick.

Teammate Moshe Sikkel drew first blood a minute into the game then it was radio silent after that. Minato Takahashi then broke the silence in the 15th minute, followed by Landon Springer Jordan's goal, then Namai-Scoggin's consecutive hat trick.

Only Jude Rayphand from Kanoa FC got a nip at the goal in the 21st minute and they were not able to score anymore.

MP United FC Team-1 Blue 2, Tan Holdings FC-1

MP United FC's Blue team also won their game against Tan Holdings FC, 2-1.

Seo "Stephen" Yeom scored both goals in the 14th and 28th minute, while Emerson Brillo scored Tan Holdings' lone goal in the 17th minute.

U14 GIRLS 5V5 Tan Holdings FC 5, Paire FC 1

Tan Holdings Football Club rushed through Paire Football Club, 5-1.

Xyriel Pascual drew first blood and completed the hat-trick in the 36th minute, while teammates Alyza De Belen and Angel Calayag added two goals.

Phoenix Gross scored the lone goal for Paire in the 22nd minute.

Meanwhile, Kanoa Football Club won over Matansa Football Club Via forfeit.

Results of the U17 girls and boys games will be posted in the next issues of *Saipan Tribune*.

Tan Holdings 50th Anniversary Swim Meet this Saturday

By MARK RABAGO
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The Northern Mariana Islands Swimming Federation will be hosting the Tan Holding 50th Anniversary Swim Meet this Saturday starting at 6pm in the waters off the Civic Center Beach.

The open water swim is in celebration of Tan Holdings' 50th anniversary and will have competition in the 50m for U8, 100m for U10, and 500m, 1,000m, and 1,500m for open swimmers.

In keeping with the 50 theme, NMISF also added a 50+ category for the 1,500m. An award ceremony will be held after the race at the Guma Sakman/500 Sails facility.

Registration closes tomorrow, Feb. 17, and there is no race day registration. Medals will be awarded to the Top 3 in each division and event T-shirts are available in requested sizes until supplies last.

NMISF board member and Saipan Swim Club head coach Richard Sikkel extended his appreciation to Tan Holdings for sponsoring their meet this weekend.

"NMISF appreciates Tan Holdings' commitment to promoting all sports in the NMI year in and out and especially as part of their 50th anniversary. We look forward to putting on this event and making it memorable with the support of Tan Holdings," he said, adding that he expects 100 participants for the event.

For more information or to register, click on the link https://www.webscorer.com/register?raceid=304251&fbclid=IwAR33MWebh3rRel6srZmn0foyFVtEgxchrY8QWs045X5_tjHUZmtT15sVx1U.

LAHUNN

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A began with Cook Islands' Raetea Lyn Rongo losing to Adani Raihan Muhammad Azhari, 3-6, 2-6.

Papua New Guinea's Colita Hakena also dropped her match against Daania Daniella Abd Hazli, 1-6, 3-6, before Chae and Rongo went down against Azhari and Lynn Lim, 2-6, 4-6.

Against Singapore, Chae lost to Joy-Shania Lee, 1-6, 2-6; Hakena absorbed a 2-6, 1-6 loss to Victoria Alekseykina, 2-6, 2-6; and Hakena and Rongo fell against Alekseykina and Sophie Ashley Chua. 2-6, 3-6.

CNMI Sports Hall of Famer and longtime national tennis coach Jeff Race, who is coaching the boys U14 team, said the Islanders are visibly struggling to get used to the clay courts in Sri Lanka.

"We started yesterday and lost 0-3 to Kyrgyzstan. LaHunn played 11 bad games then went on a tear for three games before losing. He didn't play well again today (yesterday) and we were down 0-2 (against Bangladesh) having lost both singles matches quite badly. The boys were feeling bad going into the doubles. LaHunn played with the No. 3 player from Solomons. They were down 2-6, 2-5, but got excited as they began to fight back game by game. They went up 6-5 and lost the next game so they played a tiebreaker, which they won."

The Northern Mariana Islands Tennis Association president said he's glad that Lam finally got his groove back against Bangladesh in the doubles match.

"Finally, LaHunn was playing consistently well and his partner was too. The super tiebreaker was very crazy and the boys were pumped. They won 10-8 to win their first match here. Now that they have a better feeling I hope to see some better performances tomorrow (Wednesday) against Lebanon. We have either three or four more days of competition depending on how things go," he said.

Lam told *Saipan Tribune* that so far he's been having a great time in Sri Lanka.

"Everything is great so far in Sri Lanka, people are kind, the food is delicious and exotic."

As for the games, the 12-year-old said he's pumped to be playing against some of the best players in his age group from the region.

"This is my first time playing in the ITF U14 world team competition and it has a lot of good players representing their nations in Asia and Oceania. It excites me to meet top players from the different countries and play the matches."

Chae, for her part, echoed what Lam said, saying she too is having the time of her life in the South Asian nation.

"It's going very well! I'm meeting a lot of friends from other countries. The competition is going well too. Our team is working hard. Our opponents might be strong players, but we're showing our best to make them awesome matches," she said.

NMI

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laser-focus on doing his best in the cross country championships.

"I'm incredibly thrilled to go to Australia for the World Athletics Cross Country Championships and to meet new individuals who I'll be competing against there. I'm sure it's going to be an amazing experience. I anticipate that I will fall further back in the pack in the race, and it will be a really difficult yet enjoyable competition."

The Northern Marianas College student hopes the training he underwent this past few months will pay off in Australia.

"My goal for the past two months of training has been to gradually increase the number of miles I run each week while also focusing on improving the finer points of my running form. And I just want to say thanks to all my coaches and God for giving me this opportunity to compete for the NMI," he said.

Tan and Veloria will both be racing in the senior division in the 10K race on Feb. 18.

Aside from competing in the World Masters in the 55-59 Year Old Division on Feb. 19, Snyder will also be attending two coaching seminars as well as teach a seminar on endurance running using a games-based approach during the cross country championships.

The CNMI will be joining five other island nations to debut for the first time at a World Cross Country Championship, which is regarded as the toughest race on the calendar. It combines the world's greatest distance runners and challenging terrain to create a unique spectacle in sport.

The 2023 event will be the 44th edition of these storied championships and will welcome more than 550 elite athletes from more than 60 countries to the famed Mount Panorama venue at Bathurst.

2022

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said Nelson.

The NMI's Logan Mister and Andrew Johnson settled for silver after they lost the third set against Vanuatu's Chillia James and Banga Stivano at the Crowne Plaza sand courts in the finale of the beach volleyball competition of the NMPMG.

NMIVA thought it was the best volleyball venue that the Pacific Games has ever had and was also said so by visiting players and coaches, added Nelson.

Nelson also acknowledged former NMIVA president Somia Quan's hardwork and effort she put into the Games, along with NMI National Volleyball coach Tyce Mister for "put[ting] together a strong training program to get our players ready. Our players showed great skill and sportsmanship, and the fans from around the Marianas came out to support."

As for what 2023 has in store for the association, NMIVA has reinstalled two sand courts at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan beach and Nelson thanks them as well as the Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality "for giving us the right environmental guidance in replacing the courts that were removed for the games."

Nelson said that they are also "looking forward to a great year of volleyball in the Marianas as we prepare for the Micronesian Games and Pacific Games."

According to NMIVA's 2022 annual report, "with the completion of the Pacific Mini Games, the NMIVA board continues to prioritize training for the next set of Games… in the Micro and Pacific Games. Open communication has continually been made with the selected coach, Mike Rabago from Guam, in hopes of creating another event here on Saipan in preparation for the upcoming Micro and Pacific Games."

Also in the report, "with the success of the 2022 Pacific Mini Games, the board members have made a strong effort to continue to promote and encourage the community to participate in various volleyball activities. The focus of the board is to enhance and strengthen the knowledge of the community's involvement in volleyball in hopes to achieve a higher level of playing and broaden the opportunities available."

Other volleyball games were also set up in 2022 and in 2023 with the continuation of the Public School System's volleyball indoor and grass youth league tournaments.

Along with this, the NMIVA also assisted in volleyball community outreach events such as the Boonie Babies' "Sets for Pets" volleyball fundraising event, Substance Abuse Addiction Rehabilitation (SAAR)-Recovery month grass volleyball event; beach volleyball tournament at Hyatt volleyball courts with six teams and 21 participants; and from Dec. 17 to 30, 2022, the Agape Christmas Volleyball Tournament at Agape gymnasium.

The NMIVA board then thanked everyone for their assistance for the success of the 2022 NMPMG and said "Many events and activities have been made possible… due to the active cooperation of the board members and the community. We are grateful for all the assistance that was provided which made the completion of the 2022 Pacific Mini Games a huge success and we look forward to participating in the future games and possibly hosting a few tournaments in the new year."

Leonard makes it rain from deep, Clippers outshoot Warriors

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LaHunn, Hannah start campaign in Sri Lanka

By MARK RABAGO
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CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
CNMI junior netters Hannah Chae, second from left, and LaHunn Lam, fourth from left, pose with Pacific Oceania boys U14 team coach and longtime CNMI national tennis coach Jeff Race, left, and the rest of the Pacific Oceania Team in the 2023 ITF World Teams Competition Asia/Oceania Pre-Qualifying Events in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

CNMI junior netters LaHunn Lam and Hannah Chae kicked off their campaign with the Pacific Oceania Team in the 2023 ITF World Teams Competition Asia/Oceania Pre-Qualifying Events last Monday in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Wins remain elusive for the Islanders as Lam's boys U14 team lost to Kyrgyzstan, 0-3, and Bangladesh, 1-2; while Chae's girls U14 squad succumbed, 0-3, to both Malaysia and Singapore.

Playing in Group C, Pacific Oceania's U14 boys team went through a buzzsaw against Kyrgyzstan. Tahiti's Toanui Lee Tam first lost to Roman Kim, 1-6, 0-6. Lam didn't fare any better against David Mogilevski, 0-6 3-6, before Lam and Solomon Islands' John Kenndy Taufunu bowed to Mogilevski and Ridvan Loianov, 1-6 3-6.

Lam and company gave a better account of themselves against Bangladesh despite losing the first two matches. Tam fell against Jawad Mohammad Bhuiyan, 0-6, 2-6, and Lam went down against Md Tanvir Mun Tushar, 2-6, 0-6.

Lam and Taufunu bounced back, however, whey they salvaged a tough 6-2, 6-7(2), 8-10 win over Bhuiyan and MD Mohammad Arhaam Azizul Amin.

Chae and her team's matchup against Malaysia in Group

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NMI cross country team descends Down Under

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
From left, Sildrey Veloria, Dr. Ron Snyder, and Tania Tan take a photo at the Sydney Opera House after completing an 8-mile run.

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Tania Tan, Sildrey Veloria, and coach/masters athlete Dr. Ron Snyder are now in Australia and completed a training run in Sydney before embarking on their three-and-a-half- hour bus ride to Bathurst, the site of the World Athletics Cross Country Championships 2023.

"We are in Sydney for two days recovering from the trip. Tania and Sildrey compete in the 18th and I compete on the 19th. Today (Tuesday) we did a nice 8-mile run from the Sydney Opera House along the harbor," Synder said in a social media message to *Saipan Tribune*.

All three are looking forward to representing the CNMI in the cross country championships.

"I'm very grateful to be given this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to compete at such a prestigious event. This is a very elite race with so many amazing athletes so I just hope to do the best I can. Since it is currently winter in the U.S., I actually am very much looking forward to being back in the warmth. I can't wait to be able to race in shorts and a tank top and not be freezing. I am an island girl after all," said Tan.

Veloria, for his part, knows coming in with a podium finish is not in the cards, but is

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'2022 NMPG highlight of NMIVA'

By LEIGH GASES
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The Northern Mariana Islands Volleyball Association's highlight was undoubtedly the 2022 Northern Marianas Pacific Mini Games, according to newly elected president Chris Nelson.

"Highlight of 2022 was definitely hosting the 2022 Mini Games at Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan beach and the great performance of our men's and women's teams. We would like to send out a big thank you to all the hard work that went into the hosting, the coaching, the training, and the playing,"

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QUINN BREADY
Andrew Johnson bumps the ball during a set of their beach volleyball game with partner Logan Mister in the 2022 Northern Marianas Pacific Mini Games held last June at the Crowne Plaza Saipan sand courts.